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# Journalism in the Age of the Net

Changing Society, Changing Profession

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# Contents

Acknowledgements .....	7
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## I JOURNALISM IN THE AGE OF THE NET

1. Introduction .....	9
1.1 Background of the study .....	9
1.2 Research questions .....	10
1.3 Notes on the approach .....	11
2. The basis: Journalism as a social phenomenon .....	15
2.1 The historicity of the journalistic profession .....	15
2.1.1 Characteristics of the profession .....	15
2.1.1.1 Producers of a new commodity .....	15
2.1.1.2 Evolving practices .....	17
2.1.1.3 Detaching professional identity .....	19
2.1.2 Reasonings of the change .....	21
2.2 Information Society and journalism .....	27
2.2.1 Signs of change .....	27
2.2.2 Shaping the change .....	29
2.2.3 Implications for journalism .....	31
3. The setting: The Internet, media and journalism .....	34
3.1 Prophecies and prototypes .....	34
3.2 Characteristics of Internet communication .....	35
3.3 Issues for journalism .....	41
3.3.1 Publishing on the Internet .....	42
3.3.2 Empowering journalists .....	45
3.3.3 Journalist's professional role .....	48
4. The vision: Four views on the Net and journalism .....	54
4.1 Editors .....	55
4.1.1 Strategic experts .....	55
4.1.2 "You have to adapt..." .....	56
4.1.3 Assessing the view of editors .....	59

4.2 Reporters .....	60
4.2.1 Informed opinion .....	60
4.2.2 Useful but not indispensable .....	61
4.2.3 Assessing the view of newspaper reporters .....	64
4.3 New media experts .....	65
4.3.1 A view from outside conventional journalism .....	65
4.3.2 Changing times .....	65
4.3.3 Assessing the view of new media experts .....	68
4.4 New media practice .....	69
4.4.1 A two-way relationship .....	69
4.4.2 Distinctive characteristics of online publications .....	70
4.4.3 Assessing the view of new media practice .....	73
5. Conclusions .....	74
5.1 Two inclinations .....	74
5.2 Intervening aspects .....	77
5.3 Looking ahead .....	81
Literature .....	87

## II RESEARCH REPORTS

(In Finnish, not included in this electronic publication.)

1. Sanomalehdistö ja Internet - toiveita, huolia ja epätietoisuutta [Newspapers and the Internet - hopes, concerns and uncertainties]

2. Tyrkytystä ja räätälöintiä. Verkkajulkaisujen sisältöpiirteiden tarkastelua journalismin kannalta. [Pushing and tailoring. Analysing the content features of online publications from the perspective of journalism]

3. Yleisö kutsuu, kuuleeko journalismi? Visioita verkkojournalismista ja -journalistista. [Audience calling, journalism do you read? Visions on online journalism and journalists]

4. “Se niinku kuuluu osata”. Internet sanomalehtitoimittajan työssä [It’s like you have to know it. The Internet in the newspaper reporter’s work]

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*Ari Heinonen*



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the study

The origins of this study lie in an earlier research project which I conducted in the early 1990s. In the context of professional ethics, that project (Heinonen 1995) dealt with the professional identity of journalists, and with the ideals and practices of the profession. In the final chapter I tried to outline a study that would identify how the journalistic profession and the professional role of journalists might change in the so-called “information society”.

The main impetus for this was provided by the Internet, which at the time was emerging as a serious issue in journalism with the introduction of new graphical browsers of the World Wide Web. It was only then that the experiments with online newspapers and other journalistic products on the Internet seemed to warrant more than casual technical interest. At the same time, the Internet was also becoming more relevant from the point of view of journalistic information gathering because numerous institutions and other sources were beginning to use the Web as an information channel. And outside journalism, the Internet as a general communication medium was growing fast, faster than anyone had expected; indeed some voices were predicting that the “old media” would soon fade away. These developments were persuasive enough to encourage a research project that would analyse the effects of the Internet on journalism and the journalistic profession.

Inspired by an evolving or even revolutionary field, my motivation has not been purely academic. With a print journalist’s background I was a journalism lecturer at the time that the idea of this study began to take shape, and I was obviously most interested in learning how to cope with questions of online journalism in journalism education. On the other hand, during the past few years I have been involved in various projects at the Tampere Journalism Research and Development Centre that have dealt with the new media and journalism. These have shown to me the importance of new communications technology to journalism. Thus this study wishes to have some value for practical purposes as well, for those planning the future of journalism education and for those developing journalism for and with new media.

## 1.2 Research questions

The backbone of the project consists of four empirical studies carried out between spring 1997 and winter 1998/99. These have been reported in full in separate volumes (Heinonen 1997b, 1998c and d and 1999; all in Finnish). In these studies I tried to cover the topic from different angles: One of the studies was based on a survey among Finnish newspaper editors who reflected from their viewpoint on the signs of change in journalism. Another study approached the topic from the point of view of newspaper reporters, and data were collected in focused interviews. Another set of interviews was conducted with experts from a little further away from traditional media: experts familiar with new media (especially the Internet) but also with journalism, helped to shape the change of journalism. The fourth study consisted of an analysis of the content features of online publications from the perspective of journalism.

The basic research questions have been formulated by observing the professional as well as the academic debate on the implications of new communication technology not only for journalism but also in society in general. The focus, especially in journalism, has been on the Internet and its relationship with journalism. Within, around and outside journalism it has been asked, for instance, what features of the Internet, if any, are relevant to journalism. It has also been asked whether newspapers and print journalism will vanish, as was (once again) predicted in the mid-90s, or whether they will benefit from the Internet. And will journalists become redundant in the Age of the Net, or is there still need for journalistically mediated communication? And if there is to be online journalism, will it be the “same old journalism” only with new tools, or are new skills and attitudes required of journalists?

In this lively discussion it has been possible to distinguish three patterns which form the focus of this study:

- i Journalistic presentation and new communications technology (publishing on the Internet).
- ii Journalistic information gathering and new communications technology (empowering journalists with the tools of the Internet).
- iii The status and characteristics of journalists in the society of new communications technology (professional role).

Equipped with this kind of curiosity, my research is rooted in the tradition of journalism research. It has been my intention to say something about journalism, especially the journalistic profession in a social context which seems to be changing. This indicates that my position towards journalism can be



called anti-essentialistic, in other words, I do not see journalism as something that has always been the same, never mind that it should always remain the same. My basic argument is that journalism is a social phenomenon: it emerged as a consequence of certain social (including technological and economic) developments and it is attached to certain cultural (including political) formations. From this it follows that as society or certain relevant aspects of it change, so too is journalism liable to change. It should be added that the relationship between journalism and society is interactional: while journalism is moulded by developments in society, journalism (being part of society) is itself shaping developments in society.

Although this study is journalism research, it obviously has other dimensions as well due to the topic at hand. Firstly, analysis of the relationship between the Internet and journalism brings the study close to (communications) technology research. Secondly, the very concept of the Information Society, which is the underlying context of the study, has to be introduced at least for the purposes of this work. Technology is an important factor on this dimension, too, since it is the development of communications and network technology that has provided the material base for the concept of the Information Society.

What is significant, however, is that both these dimensions are subordinated to the foundations of the study. The Internet as well as the concept of the Information Society are tools which are used in studying journalism. Although, in a way, technology sets the agenda for this study, it does not determine it. To quote Manuel Castells (1996, 4): "...we must take technology seriously, using it as the point of departure of this inquiry; we ought to locate this process of revolutionary technological change in the social context in which it takes place and by which it is being shaped...". What I want to do is reach a better understanding of the changing nature of journalism in an era when important changes are occurring in society in relation to developments of communications technology.

### 1.3 Notes on the approach

One of the challenges in this kind of research is that the object of study is in constant flux. Much of what was said about the Internet and media in the early 1990s by now sounds quite archaic, and undoubtedly the researcher would be in a much safer position if it were possible to lean on the safety-net of hindsight. Nevertheless, I think it is important to try and analyse phenomena when they are occurring and possibly even to influence the direction they take. This can be described as an anticipating approach which tries to illuminate the nature of ongoing processes. The important thing about this

approach is that it is based on the research traditions of relevant fields, because although the actual topic of the contemporary analysis is new, it has been in a way prepared by preceding developments (see Castells 1996, 329).

The perspective of the study is predominantly that of newspaper journalism. There are several reasons why newspapers provide a useful prism for the examination of the changes going on in journalism. Firstly, the newspaper may be regarded as the archetypal modern mass medium (McQuail 1994, 267), because it was in newspapers that journalism was established as a profession. Newspapers have also provided a showcase for the evolution of the journalistic profession. Secondly, newspapers are the longest-surviving forum of journalism in spite of repeated challenges by various new innovations in communications technology, notably radio and television. Indeed, it can be said that newspapers have a collective memory of various strategies of coping with new technology. Thirdly, the importance of studying newspapers is underscored by their role in society. In spite of the broad spectrum of communications media, the newspaper institution remains one of the cornerstones of Western democracy. In the words of Colin Sparks (1996, 43): "The nature and character of newspapers, their degree of freedom, their availability and their content, are central to the citizen's level of knowledge about the world of politics and economics." Fourthly, it has been suggested that in newspapers the potential impact of Internet communications technology will be most keenly felt. At least so far "The Net" has been seen as a greater challenge to the print than to traditional electronic media, both in journalism and in advertising.

The audience is present in this study mostly in relation to journalistic work and its changes. This does not mean that the significance of the reactions of the audience with regard to the development of journalism is ignored. On the contrary, throughout this study it is made quite clear that in the Age of the Net the relationship between the journalistic profession and the audience will be most crucial (see also e.g. Dahlgren 1996, 68-70). Such issues as the audience's assessment of the performance of journalism, the fragmentation of the audience and the audience's attitudes towards new communications technology are some of the topics which are relevant in this respect and in themselves worthy of exhaustive examination. However, in this study I will be looking upon these issues predominantly from the point of view of journalism.

In describing the relationship between journalism and society, particularly the interdependence between the evolution of journalism and journalistic profession and, on the other hand, developments in different spheres of society (which I call the "historicality of journalism"), I draw mostly on British and American scholars. I am aware that this approach is problematic inasmuch as the emergence and development of journalism has been more varied globally than can be presented in this study. Journalism has devel-

oped differently in the USA and in Europe, and even in Europe there has been variation from country to country, not to speak about the processes on other continents. This is due to cultural, political, economic and other differences in different parts of the world. (On the differences between Anglo-American and French journalism, see Chalaby 1996; on the formation of journalism in Germany, see K. Pietilä 1980; on the developments in Finland, see Aula 1991, Kahma 1979, Keränen 1979 and Tommila and Salokangas 1998).

On the other hand, I think the decision to focus on the Anglo-American path of journalistic development is justified because the journalistic profession and its characteristics have evolved predominantly as a reflection of developments particularly in the USA. Journalistic values, practices and genres have very much taken shape in the USA, among other reasons because of the scale of journalism as a social and business institution in that country.

It is indeed possible to distinguish - at least to a certain extent - common features in how professional journalism and the professional journalist is understood world-wide, with the origins of this idea of "global journalism and journalist" lying very much in the role-models and ideals that have evolved in the USA (on comparative analysis of professional journalism and journalists, see Splichal and Sparks 1994, and Weaver 1998). This no doubt has to do with the global hegemony of American culture since World War II, which has also affected journalism research (see V. Pietilä 1997, 50) and perhaps even more importantly, journalism education. It is also reflected in the tradition of relevant journalism research (the line of inquiry that studies professionalism in its social context) which - like so many other fields of social science - is very much influenced by US scholars. This is not a unique feature of journalism research, but also typical of professionalism research in general, as pointed out by Konttinen (1989, 1-6).

This setting also applies to the topic of this study: "If the first Industrial Revolution was British, the first Information Technology was American..." (Castells 1996, 53). The Internet first developed into a general communication device in the USA, and it is here that its journalistic use has also been most advanced. The experiences and models of US media and the analyses of journalism scholars are transported to Finland and other countries around the world by way of constant interaction on a professional and academic level - and via the Internet itself.

\* \* \*

This report at hand summarises my research for this project. Chapter 2 elaborates my basic approach towards journalism and its nature, and reviews the concept of the Information Society in relation to journalism. Chapter 3 describes the characteristics of Internet communication and the issues it raises

to journalism. Chapter 4 discusses the results of the four empirical studies. And finally, in chapter 5, I reflect upon the findings of the study and try to draw conclusions with regard to the practice and research of journalism.

## 2. The basis: Journalism as a social phenomenon

Before moving on to look more closely at the features and prophecies of the Internet on journalism, it is necessary to define my approach to journalism and the journalistic profession. In doing this, I lean on a research tradition which understands journalism as a social phenomenon both on the level of professional practices and professional ideals. This implies that journalism is a variable rather than a constant. Its characteristics are shaped by various developments in society, one of these being technological development. My premise is then close to what Schudson (1996, 142) calls the “sociology of the production of news”. I emphasise in my study the historicality of the profession, meaning essentially three things:

- a) the emergence of journalism and the journalistic profession was connected to specific developments in society;
- b) as society changes, so too do the characteristics of journalism evolve; and
- c) in the present day various social trends that can be condensed in the term Information Society are important factors shaping journalism.

### 2.1 The historicality of the journalistic profession

To help contextualise the change of journalism in the Age of the Net, the discussion below presents a condensed overview of the evolution of journalism and the journalistic profession. Drawing mainly on the work of Anglo-American scholars, it is my intention to outline a typified scheme of how journalism as a specific profession appeared and has evolved.

#### 2.1.1 Characteristics of the profession

##### *2.1.1.1 Producers of a new commodity*

Although in some sense journalism can be understood as part of a continuum in the long tradition of human information exchange (see e.g. Stephens 1997), a more viable approach is to look upon journalism as a result of specific changes in society’s communication sphere. According to Carey (1997/1969, 128-129) Western countries experienced in the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries not only industrial revolution, but also a corresponding “revolution in communication and popular culture”. One dimension in this revolution is the “development of a new social role, the professional communicator” (ibid., 132).

Carey’s “professional communicator” is a broad term that embraces a range of professions or occupations: “A professional communicator is one who controls a special skill in manipulation of symbols and who uses this skill to forge a link between distinct persons or differential groups” (ibid., 132). Members of the journalistic profession - reporters and editors - are only one example of this new breed of professionals. For the purposes of this study the essence, however, is that as a consequence of a certain social development - the communications revolution - distinct occupational categories were born with distinct role identities (ibid., 133). The implication as far as journalism is concerned is that prior to the formation of the “professional communicator”, one can hardly talk about journalists as a specific professional category.

From the perspective of the history of journalism, the era of Carey’s communications revolution in society was the era when journalism and the journalistic profession emerged. Chalaby (1998, see also Chalaby 1996) traces this “invention of journalism” to the nineteenth century. Prior to that time the press “was not a distinctive field of discursive production” (Chalaby 1998, 33). According to Chalaby there were no journalists but publicists who owned, managed and edited the newspapers. These were people who wanted to air their personal or interest-group opinions and thus influence the politics in their communities (ibid., 15-18). Accordingly, the contents of newspapers was not journalism, especially in the sense of news journalism, but mostly articles of opinion.

The formation of the professional category of journalists was at once a condition for and an outcome of the transformation of newspapers into more business-like ventures. “News became an instrument of competition when leading press-owners and editors began to use news coverage to gain competitive advantage over rivals” (ibid., 78). Drawing on Schudson (1978, 25; see also Carey 1997/1986, 157-159) one can describe this transformation by saying that if earlier newspapers were providing a service to elites of societies, the then modern press sold a newly invented product - the news - to a general audience (and at the same time sold the readership to advertisers). Chalaby (1998, 65) calls this transformation “a rupture” in the history of the press, and Schudson says that news was “an original product” (Schudson 1978, 25), both scholars thus indicating that journalism, as we understand it, emerged at that stage.

The new commodity required its producers: enter the professional news operative, the reporter. “Newspaper reporting...was a new information gathering profession that arose in the mid-nineteenth century...” (Schudson 1995,

49). The function of these professionals was to actively seek for new topics to be reported in the form of news on the pages of newspapers. Since the news had become a commodity in the media business, there was a growing need to supply this commodity. To satisfy this need “leading newspapers developed complex and expansive information gathering services” (Chalaby 1998, 79), and journalists with various tasks were at the core of these services. These were men - indeed, mostly male - who worked with news to earn a living, unlike earlier publicists who published to influence. “The institution of paid reporters was not only novel but, to some, shocking” (Schudson 1978, 24). A new profession was born.

An important dimension in this development of newspapers from one-man-shops to bigger operations striving for revenues and directed by business logic, was the organisational model that was adopted. When the need for more diversified personnel became apparent, and reporters emerged as a specific professional group, that marked the beginning of the division of labour in newsrooms. This was followed by the emergence of professional editors (in distinction to combined owner-publisher-editors) and numerous other posts. The newspaper became an organisation. (Smith 1978, 165-166) It is interesting to note how the overall spirit of industrialism was reflected in journalistic organisations. The work process and corresponding organisation evolved to resemble the assembly-line, the icon of the Industrial Society. As in factories, the tasks in newsrooms were broken down into smaller parts, with each editorial worker adding a piece to the final product. (see Rantz et al. 1997/1980) This general pattern continues to prevail even today<sup>1</sup>, meaning that typically the relationship between the journalist and the final outcome of the journalist’s work is rather vague.

### *2.1.1.2 Evolving practices*

Ever since the emergence of the journalistic profession, the practices in this field have been constantly evolving, leading gradually to patterns that can be called rituals of the profession. Working practices have appeared, developed and changed in accordance with the various factors that have shaped and reshaped the frames within which journalists work. There is no doubt that these practices are still continuing to evolve.

Reporting itself was a novelty which emerged with the new product, the news. Chalaby (1998) sees reporting as the most important feature in the evolution of journalism. Referring to the “rupture” that brought about journalism, Chalaby says that “reporting is a purely journalistic practice differ-

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<sup>1</sup> A useful illustration of the news-production process is given in Ericson et al. 1987, 98; it is developed in Sirkkunen and Kuusisto 1999.

ent in character to discursive practices employed by publicists and literary authors". The essential feature of reporting is that it is fact-centred, dissociating facts from opinions as well as emotions. (ibid., 128-129) A major contributing factor was shorthand, which "was the first of that long series of journalistic techniques which...promise the reader the complete recovery of some semblance of reality" (Smith 1978, 161). Hence reporting enhances the image of the reporter as a by-stander instead of a partisan in the events.

The interview is another example of the evolutionary nature of journalistic working practices. As Schudson (1995, 72-93) and Chalaby (1998, 127-128) point out, interviewing as a journalistic tool greatly affected journalism and the profession. Before the invention of the interview, reporting consisted largely of observing and writing verbatim accounts of what was observed or, alternatively, publishing document texts. Asking questions and even more, quoting the answers in the news text was initially so strange a practice that the pioneers of interviewing had to explain to the readers what they were doing (Schudson 1995, 48). The significance of this new practice for journalists was that it gave them more control over reporting than before. Journalists could dictate the contents of the report by choosing first the interviewees and then the questions. This way the new practice empowered journalists with a strengthened professional status.

A more recent journalistic practice is investigative reporting (see Ettema and Glasser 1998, Meyer 1991). The essence of the various methods employed in this practice is that instead of conveying facts (or items considered as facts) journalists reveal facts. This refers to techniques that are quite similar to those used by researchers: systematic data analysis, comparison of different document materials, utilisation of computer-assisted methods, etc. This practice stages journalists as an independent and increasingly self-sustaining group of professionals in sole control of news contents, but still determinantly "mere observers of fact" who do not make value judgements (Ettema and Glasser 1998, 61). Corroboration for this role-image is drawn from the science whose methods are being applied in journalism: "The journalist who adapts the tools of scientific method to his or her own trade can be in a position to make useful evaluations with the more powerful objectivity of science" (Meyer 1991, 13).

In the evolution of these concrete practices one can distinguish a pattern of professional positioning of journalists. This positioning is on the one hand characterised by detachment from the society represented in the news, and on the other hand by a strive for authority of the news. This leads us to another feature of the profession, which also defines the nature of journalism, namely the development of the professional identity of journalists.



### *2.1.1.3 Detaching professional identity*

The path to a distinct professional identity of journalist can be traced back to the stage when journalists started to become aware of themselves as a certain category of “professional communicators”. Schudson (1995) describes how in the USA “reporters in the late nineteenth century came to identify with one another across newspapers”. This was connected to changes in working practices. As was pointed out earlier, for instance interviewing gave journalists more control over the communication act, thus enhancing the role of the journalist from a conveyer of a message to an active player in this process. The consequences were twofold: the professional reporter became a visible public type and began to achieve work-related identity. (ibid., 91-92)

The professional identity of journalists has been formed and consolidated by various means: partly by adopting new and more “professional” working practices, partly by forming professional unions and associations (see Elliot 1978), and even by pursuing a position as an object of science (V. Pietilä 1997, 94). An important factor in the construction of professional self-identity has been the system of professional ethics. As White (1989) points out, the development of professional ethics is connected with the efforts of professions to gain (better) social status. A key feature of professional ethics is that it is formal, i.e. there exist codes of professional conduct which - at least ideally - are terms of reference for applying practices in everyday work. As we know, journalists do have codes of conduct and they are basically rather similar all around the world (see e.g. Laitila 1995). Another important aspect is that these codes, and ethical systems in general, are created and enforced by self-regulation of the profession itself, though often the processes for creating formal ethical codes and systems are launched by forces external to the profession. Indeed, even in the case of journalism the profession has shown exceptional activity in the field of self-regulation when pressures from other sectors in society have been growing. (Heinonen 1995, 62-63) In other words, journalists have defended the purity of their profession against outside influence by claiming that the profession by itself is capable of maintaining the quality of journalistic performance.

Professional ethics and its principles can be seen as a self-portrait of journalists, painted by the profession itself and portraying the motif as it itself wants to be seen. Codes of conduct thus present the ideals of the profession, and although these ideals do not always match with reality (see Heinonen 1996), they are important elements in characterising the journalistic profession.

Another picture of journalists’ self-identity can be drawn from outside the profession. In the study of journalistic practices, journalism scholars have observed that “not only journalists work in particular kinds of organizations, but their work draws and depends on particular cultural traditions” (Schudson

1995, 13). These traditions guide everyday tasks in newsrooms so that journalists adhere to certain routines or rituals which constitute basic directives for their performance (see e.g. Nohrstedt and Ekström 1994, Shoemaker and Reese 1996, Tuchman 1978). These rituals are not necessarily overt, but they are grounded in “tacit competencies that are learned and reproduced in everyday tasks by way of following the example of older professionals...” (Kunelius 1998, 217). Rituals carry with them elements of professional principles, since they concern not only practical aspects of journalistic work but also, for instance, define the status of journalists towards sources, the audience, etc. In contrast to codes of conduct, rituals show journalists in earthly practices. In this way journalistic rituals expose the mundane self-identity of journalists rather than the professional ideal.

Despite their apparent differences, both the idealistic self-portrait and the outsiders’ view of journalistic rituals convey largely the same message about the professional identity of journalists. Professional ethics - as part of a campaign to raise the status of the profession - underlines the autonomy of the profession. The underlying theme of ethical codes is the positioning of journalists in control of the communication process (though as servants of the audience), but as observers who do not make value judgements. In the eyes of more critical scholars, journalistic rituals strengthen the professional identity of journalists as something which translates objectivity into non-responsibility and even non-caring practices. Although journalists insist that they are in control of the communication process and fiercely resist attempts to challenge this, they still declare - in the name objectivity - that as professionals they are merely observing and reporting, without being participants in the matters on which they are reporting.

Although there are of course different nuances in how journalists perceive their professional role and although even the possibility of being a value-free communicator has been forcefully challenged (see e.g. Ettema and Glasser 1998; Schudson 1995), it seems that the current journalistic identity is characterised by two closely interwoven basic elements: self-sustainability and detachment. These both reflect journalists’ strive for an autonomous standing in society, strive for a status similar to that of traditional professions such as law and medicine. Although journalism is not a closed profession, the efforts to maintain its standards by internal mechanisms help to create an image of an autonomous entity. Similarly, intentional efforts to create distance between the objects of reporting and journalists is a means to strengthen the image of a profession outside or preferably above mundane social contradictions. These characteristics are not of course always consciously present in the journalist’s work, but they do exist in the profession’s collective identity and are reproduced in journalistic practices.

## 2.1.2 Reasonings of the change

After accepting the premise that journalism and the journalistic profession are evolving phenomena, the next obvious question is, what are the forces or agents that affect journalism so that its characteristics, even ideals change? The tradition of journalism research that traces the origins of transformations in journalism<sup>2</sup> draws our attention to the main elements that should be taken into account. Starting out from Schudson (1996; see also Schudson 1978, especially pp. 31-43) but adding components from other scholars, I present in the following a framework of reasonings for the change of journalism. These reasonings are patterns of explanations as to why journalism is like it is and why journalists are like they are and why they work the way they do. The overall context is of course society as a whole, but within this context it is possible to distinguish four reasonings of change: socio-cultural, business, technological and professional-normative reasoning.

Admittedly, these reasonings sometimes overlap and always affect one other. Also, the strength of any individual reasoning affecting journalism varies at different times, resulting in different “balances of power”. At the moment, for instance, the technological reasoning is clearly quite a strong agent of change in journalism, directing at least in part the business decisions in the media. Similarly, technological change seems to be moulding the profession’s norms and values at the moment. What is most important, however, is that the relationship between journalism and these four reasonings is one of interaction: journalism shapes for instance the culture of society as well as media technology, which in turn shape journalism. The significance of this categorisation is that it helps a) to illustrate the situation of journalism in a changing social environment, and b) to contextualise the Internet as a force of change in journalism. (See Figure 2.1)

Socio-cultural reasoning refers to a broad range of factors located in the social, cultural, political and even demographic domains of society. For instance, the fact that the audience(s) of journalism has changed in both scope and in nature over time has certainly affected journalism. The growth of literacy has brought new sectors of the public within reach of journalism (Schudson 1978, 35-39), and changes in lifestyles and living conditions (urbanisation, both parents working, single-parent families, ageing populace, unemployment) affect the ways in which the public consumes or is able to

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<sup>2</sup> Again we are trekking in the field of the sociology of journalism rather than, for instance, of journalism or media history, the latter often being blind to the topics relevant here. As Carey (1997, 332-333) puts it: “...journalism needs a more usable history, one focused on practice...because the existing histories are largely histories of technology...or histories of bureaucracies...or of abstract processes...but not of a continuous social practice possessed of a distinctive nature, grounded in democratic aspirations, but variable across times, technology, and bureaucracies.”



*Figure 2.1. Reasonings of change in journalism.*

consume the products of journalism. And not only that, but also the expectations towards journalistic performance vary in different social and cultural settings.

Socio-cultural reasoning also embraces the problematic concept of democracy. According to Carey (1997, 333) “journalism begins at the birth of modern democracies” and is thus tied with a specific political system. Perhaps it is not necessary to be too rigid about the symbiotic relationship of journalism and democracy, but it is true that often the expectations towards the performance of journalism assume that the political context is a democracy. For instance, when McQuail (1992, 1997) talks about the public interest and media, he is clearly presupposing Western democracy as an overall context. He also points out that changes in social value “climates” change attitudes towards media. An important factor which in a way mediates between democratic society and journalism is statutory regulation. This regulation, carried out by public authorities and assuming various forms from legislation to public subsidies to the media, is not only national but also transnational (Heinonen 1995, 59).

At the risk overloading this category with meanings, I still want to include culture with its various dimensions in this socio-cultural reasoning of the change of journalism. Itself a form of human culture, journalism is inevitably affected by changes in cultures of societies - national as well as international. “[News]... is a form of culture invented by a particular class at a particular point of history”, argues Carey (1989, 21). On the basis of Carey’s approach it is possible to conclude that journalism and its practical methods correspond to the prevailing hegemonic culture in a society. This general

notion does not exclude variations between different cultures or the existence of sub-cultures internationally as well within nations, and journalism which corresponds to those, but merely states the position of mainstream journalism in Western societies.

Business reasoning is a pattern of explanations for the change in journalism that has two faces. First, there is a tradition which in fact falls outside of journalism research but which in my opinion should not be omitted. I am referring to approaches that take the business side as a primary purpose of journalism, without any or hardly any problematisation. This approach can be called the business-economy view, the origins of which lie more in the field of economics than in media studies. The approach often has a vocabulary all its own when it talks about journalism: news is “a product”, newspapers and other media are “industry” and the public consists of “consumers” or “customers” (see e.g. recent reports on the future of the press: *The Future of...1998*; *Strategic...1996*). In essence this approach equates journalism to, say, pulp production, deriving the necessities for the change from the bottom line of balance sheets.

Another tradition is that of political economy. With a common basis in a critical attitude towards the dominance of business interests over journalism, this tradition is quite diverse. Some arguments focus on the discrepancy between the professional ideals of journalism and corporate business culture. The blame is put on faceless corporate owners and investors who have seized the power in journalism from supposedly more pure-hearted executives: “Newsrooms have begun to reflect the direction of managers with MBAs rather than green eyeshades” (McManus 1994, 1). As a consequence “...market journalism is...designed to serve the profit-maximising interest of the firm” (ibid., 184). Another line of argumentation stresses that the nature of media and journalism is inherently that of commodity production. This approach sees mass media as “industrial and commercial organisations which produce and distribute commodities” (Golding and Murdock 1979, 210; see also Garnham 1979).

Yet another approach is the one that underlines the word political in the term political economy. Studies by the Glasgow University Media Group (Eldridge 1995 and Philo 1995), Schiller (1996) and Herman and Chomsky (1988) place journalism in the context of the dual structure of the state and the (capitalist) economy and hold that under the magnifying glass. Somewhat similarly as the business economy approach, but from a totally different perspective, this approach sees business as an integral part of journalism. Since private business, especially big private business in a capitalist state is intertwined with political power, the argument is that “...the ‘societal purpose’ of the media is to inculcate and defend the economic, social, and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state” (Herman and Chomsky 1988, 298).

A somewhat more moderate perspective sees the business economy as a self-evident background of journalism, but refuses to be captured by the business logic and assumes a critical standpoint towards the influence of business on journalism. In this perspective, it is claimed that “the emergence of journalism is related to the development of the capitalist market economy” (Chalaby 1998, 66). And although business interests are not necessarily the sole factors that affect journalism, they are nonetheless the most important ones; the shape of journalism is “determined, albeit in a deflected way, by market forces” (ibid.).

Technological reasoning has an ambiguous standing in the debate about journalism and its change. On the one hand technology is seen as an autonomous agent which develops according to its own inner logic and then causes this or that in journalism. Moreover, technology is often placed outside journalism - or even culture - in some sphere of its own from where it then affects other spheres. Throughout Western highly industrialised nations “...technology is the center of civic life, the one unquestioned good, before which we both worship in awe and collapse in fear” (Carey 1997, 317)<sup>3</sup>. On the other hand technological explanations are seen as subordinate to other factors affecting journalism. For instance, Schudson (1996, 146) describes technology only as “a feature of political economy”, thus diminishing its role to a variable defined by business reasoning. This approach may underestimate the value of technological reasoning, but it is nonetheless important to state that technology is not “a force outside culture... but...intrinsically cultural” (Carey 1997, 317). Applied to the present topic, this statement means that when we are talking about the change of journalism and the journalistic profession in the age of new communications technology, the discussion cannot be limited to technology.

Despite the debate of the nature of technological reasoning, it is clear that the evolution of journalism has been greatly affected by developments in technology. In fact technological reasoning appears to be practically omnipresent when the discussion turns to the emergence and development of journalism. According to Schudson (1978, 31) “The pertinence of a technological explanation to radical changes in journalism in the 1830s is beyond question”. He refers to the developments in printing technology, paper manufacture and transportation means. Shoemaker and Reese (1996, 215) say that “the technological revolution that occurred during the 1880s and 1890s revolutionized the mass media”, also indicating that later technological developments, and computerisation in particular, have also had deep effects on

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<sup>3</sup> Carey refers specifically to the situation in the USA, but at least to some extent this description also applies to for instance Finland - one has but to observe the daily debate of the Information Society and examine how public R & D funding is allocated between different disciplines.

journalism. And even Carey (1989, 190), while sceptical about the potency of technological reasoning, refers to innovations such as printing, electrical communication and digitalisation in his discussion of “communications revolution”.

The effects of no technological innovation on journalism will of course be linear. Although we cannot go into an in-depth discussion of critical theories on how technology in general develops and is adopted in society, it is important to point out that, as Chalaby (1998, 42) phrases it: “An error...is to establish a direct relationship between [journalistic] discourse and technology.” According to Chalaby, the impact of technology on journalism is mediated by the internal rules of journalism. Even if a new technology becomes available (as the Internet in our time), the mere existence of this technology does not lead to its adaptation in journalism. Like Schudson, Chalaby points out that it is business reasoning which is in the decisive role here. The attitudes of the work-force are also relevant at least to some extent, as can be seen in a comparison of the history of newsroom computerisation in Britain and Finland. For various reasons journalists in Britain took a rather negative attitude towards what at the time was new technology, which resulted in problems in the introduction of computers. Finnish journalists, on the other hand, have coped with computers quite smoothly (see Heinonen 1998a, 172).

The relationship between technology and journalism is not a one-way road; it is not always the technology that shapes journalism. Even in the early decades of journalism, newspapers actively stimulated technological innovation. They needed more efficient printing presses to satisfy the growing markets with broadening audiences, and so the proprietors invested in new technology. (Schudson 1978, 33-34) Today we can see how the media are pouring vast amounts of money into research and development projects in which the Internet is being moulded to meet the needs of journalism. Technology and journalism live in a symbiotic relationship, influencing each other's evolution.

Professional-normative reasoning refers to a set of explanations in which the emphasis is on the role of working journalists as an agent shaping journalism. Therefore it is important to understand why journalists are like they are and why they operate the way they do. Professional-normative reasoning links to the characterisation of the profession discussed earlier, but from a different angle. It is possible to identify at least the following four elements which constitute professional-normative reasoning.

Firstly, it is possible to explain the nature of and changes in journalism by reference to journalists' personal attributes. For instance, one can pay attention to journalists' age, education or gender. Similarly, the explanations can be based on variations in journalists' political attitudes or other personal values. Although it has been difficult to show how these personal attributes affect the content and practices of journalism, it is rather obvious that in all

walks of life the individual's personal background is also present at work. (Shoemaker and Reese 1996, 63-103)<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, as was pointed out earlier, it is often perceived that journalists rely on certain repetitive methods in their assignments. The essence of these professional routines or rituals is that they are "patterned, routinized, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs" (ibid., 105). Partly these routines are necessary means with which journalists survive through the day and manage their work. On the other hand, the routines tend to lead for instance to the use of routine sources, usually official channels of information. In this way, professional routines shape the performance of journalism.

The third aspect is that of professional ethics. As was pointed out earlier, the ethical system of the journalistic profession is partly the result of the profession's effort to improve its status. In this sense the ethical system - codes of conduct, possible sanction systems, etc. - reflects the image that the profession has of itself and of its role in society. This self-created image is of course an ideal and is often set aside when everyday decisions are made, but even so ethics has a normative influence on journalistic practice and performance. At least to some extent the ethical norms guide professional routines by presenting general recommendations for acceptable conduct.

The last aspect in professional-normative reasoning is the social origin of the profession's norms and values. Although the ideal norms presented in codes of conduct typically carry the flavour of philosophy and deal with such issues as truth and honesty, they are not exactly products of deep deontological discussion (White 1989, 46). Besides being a self-portrait of the profession, the established norms reflect society's prevailing expectations towards journalism, they are "sociohistorical constructions" (Schudson 1997, 79). It can be said that professional norms are - from one side - an interpretation of public interest claims towards journalism (see McQuail 1992). Here it is not necessary to judge how accurately the expectations of the public are translated into professional values and norms for the performance of the journalist. The main point is that social valuations affect journalism through professional values.

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<sup>4</sup>Profiles of journalists from all over the world can be studied in Weaver 1998.



## 2.2 Information Society and journalism

Turning to the characteristics of present-day society and elements of change within this society, I will now locate this study in the debate about the Information Society.<sup>5</sup> I will start with a brief and condensed inventory of the trends in our society that are relevant in this regard, and from these derive an outline of the changing eras. Lastly, I will assess the new trends in society from the point of view of the change to journalism.

### 2.2.1 Signs of change

It is possible to identify five clusters of various social phenomena occurring in our time and supposedly marking the change from industrialised society to the Information Society. This is based on Webster's (1995, 6-23) analysis<sup>6</sup> but augmented with other material.

First, there are developments that are technological by nature. In this "the key idea is that breakthroughs in information processing, storage and transmission have led to the application of information technologies (IT) in virtually all corners of society" (ibid., 7). According to Castells (1996, 29) our "material culture" is being transformed by what he calls "a new technological paradigm organized around information technologies". Among the characteristics of this Information Technology Paradigm is "the networking logic [emphasis removed - A.H.] of any system or set of relationships using these new information technologies". Another feature is that specific technologies seem to be converging into integrated systems. "Thus, microelectronics, telecommunication, optoelectronics, and computers are all now integrated into information systems". (ibid., 61-62) Dizard (1997, 32) says that this development is "creating an information structure that is reshaping the American society and, by extension, the rest of the world".

Another dimension of change is economic. On one level this refers to the growing importance of so-called information industries and their contribu-

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<sup>5</sup> One problem with the topic of the Information Society is the vagueness of the terminology. Webster (1995, 24) goes so far as to say that the concept "information society" itself is "far too inexact to be acceptable as a definitive term". Indeed, several terms have been offered which at least partially cover the same research area (post-modern, post-industrial, post-fordist) (Kasvio 1998, 1) but I have nonetheless opted to use "Information Society" because of its connotative suitability for this study.

<sup>6</sup> To be fair to Webster, it must be said that he takes a very critical attitude towards defining our society as the Information Society. The definitions that he analyses and that are also introduced here - though in an elaborated form - "are in truth vague and imprecise, incapable on their own of establishing whether or not an 'information society' has arrived" (Webster 1995, 29). However, for the purposes of this study, Webster's analysis is a useful tool for describing the change in society.

tion to nations' gross national product (GNP). (Webster 1995, 11) On a more comprehensive level it is underlined that "productivity and competitiveness of units or agents in this [informational] economy (be it firms, regions, or nations) fundamentally depend upon...knowledge-based information" (Castells 1996, 66). This new type of economy - "information economy" (Webster 1995, 11) or "informational economy" (Castells 1996, 66) - is characterised by its global network nature: "...under the new historical conditions, productivity is generated through and competition is played out in a global network of interaction" (ibid.).

Thirdly, the debate about the Information Society has an occupational dimension. According to Webster's (1995, 13) interpretation this refers to the development towards a social situation where "the predominance of occupations is found in information work". Lyon (1995, 61) also points out that this occupational argument is central to much of the information society discourse, and Castells (1996, 218) formulates this trend by saying that "there is indeed a tendency toward a greater informational content in the occupational structure of advanced societies". On the other hand, it is important to note that not only are there new occupations emerging and others disappearing, but also the contents and practices of traditional occupations are changing because of, or at least in relation to information technology (Castells 1996, 217-218; Kasvio 1997, 99-101).

Furthermore, one can note the increasing importance of networks in society on the concrete as well as symbolic level. Webster (1995, 18) refers to information networks which connect locations and in consequence have "dramatic effects on the organisation of time and space". According to Castells (1996, 2) "interactive computer networks are growing exponentially, creating new forms and channels of communication". But there is more than these "hardware networks" in what is happening. Network is becoming a metaphor applicable to various spheres in society as well as society as a whole. In economy, one can say that "the basic unit of economic organization is not a subject, be it individual...or collective... the unit is the network [emphasis removed -A.H.] made up of a variety of subjects and organizations" (ibid., 198). In politics Castells (1998, 330-332) sees that the process of European unification is leading to a network state which "is characterised by the sharing of authority...along a network". In addition, the networks have important effects on how we experience the world and each other because of new limits for time and space: "All things happen in particular places and at specific times, but the characteristics of space and time have been transformed with the advent of the 'network society'". The constraints of space have been limited and time has shrunk because of the immediacy of network communication (Webster 1995, 20). Because of the seemingly all-embracing importance of networks in the change of the social era, I prefer to call

this dimension a networking logic in society (see Castells 1996, 61-62) instead of using Webster's (1995, 18-20) term "spatial" which, to my mind, is more limited.

Finally, there is a cultural dimension in the trends of change in our society. This refers to the expansion of the informational content of present-day life. According to Webster (ibid., 21-22), "contemporary culture is manifestly more heavily information laden than any of its predecessors". This is due to the increase in the volume of information which is in social circulation. Webster notes that there "is simply a great deal *more* of it about than ever before". We are living in a society which is media-saturated and we are constantly exchanging and receiving messages about ourselves and others. In the midst of this overflow of mediated messages there is one aspect which should be mentioned with regard to the change of journalism. According to Castells (1996, 3, 331, 337-342) one characteristic of media operations is that until the last quarter of the twentieth century, "the audience was seen as a largely homogenous, or susceptible to being made homogenous", but at the moment "social fragmentation spreads, as identities become more specific and increasingly difficult to share".

### 2.2.2 Shaping the change

Assessment of the trends in society described above should be commenced by reminding ourselves of the nature of society at the time journalism originated. According to Carey (1997, 322) the emergence of the present communications system can be attached to the rise of modern or industrial society, which in turn developed in conjunction with the introduction and diffusion of certain technologies. From the point of the social nature of journalism, two of the various new technologies are particularly noteworthy: "The technologies that made the modern era possible were the telegraph and the railroad." The importance of these technologies for journalism and the communications system as a whole was not only in the technical aspects of, say, telegraph, but in the social process they enabled: "When the railroad and telegraph had linked every town and time[zone], a national system of communications, regular and periodical, was possible for the first time... No longer would people live in isolated island communities..."

Carey's account tells about the formation of a wide and relatively homogenous audience in the course of the development of industrial society and within the framework of the nation-state. This is one feature that ties up journalism with the emergence of industrial society. We can also recall that journalism itself and the journalistic profession were results of new developments in the fields of technology (e.g. printing presses), economics (news as a product, promoting commodity sales by advertising) and politics (modern

democracies) and that these developments were closely connected to the emergence of industrial society. Furthermore, it is possible to see how even within journalistic institutions the spirit of industrialism prevailed in the form of factory-like production processes and hierarchic organisations.

Society today seems to be undergoing a crucial transformation from the industrial era to the information era.<sup>7</sup> Castells (1996, 17) describes this as a change from an industrial mode of development to an informational one. In the former, “the main source of productivity lies in the introduction of new energy sources”, while in the latter “the source of productivity lies in the technology of knowledge generation, information processing, and symbol communication”. Based on this distinction, we are experiencing a change which has broad and profound effects on society. Following Castells (1998, 340-349), it is possible to outline the change as follows.

First, the relationships of production are changing. Although society still is essentially capitalistic, this is a new kind of capitalism (which Castells calls informational capitalism). Its features include that “information technology and the cultural capacity to use it, are essential” in production. Also, labour is redefined “and sharply differentiated according to workers’ characteristics”, education being the critical quality in this. Secondly, social class relationships are changing so that there is a tendency towards increased inequality and polarisation. With this there is taking place a process of social exclusion, which means that “a considerable number of humans...are irrelevant both as producers and consumers, from the perspective of the system’s logic”. An additional feature is that the system only appreciates “those knowledge generators and information processors whose contribution is most important” - most other workers being potentially replaceable by machines. Thirdly, in the sphere which can be called politics in the terms of industrial society, the power relations are being transformed. This “concerns the crisis of the nation-state as a sovereign entity, and the related crisis of political democracy” [emphasis removed - A.H.]. Though power does not disappear, “the new structure of power is dominated by a network geometry, in which power relationships are always specific to a given configuration of actors and institutions”, implying a society prone to swiftly appearing periods of confusion. Fourthly, on a level which perhaps can be described as more personal or intimate, the relationships of experience are also changing, with a “profound redefinition of family, gender relationships, sexuality, and, thus, personality”.

These changes “converge toward the transformation of material foundations of social life, space and time” [emphasis removed - A.H.]. For the so-

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<sup>7</sup> Again I am referring mainly to Western countries, and even here these developments are not uniform.

cial roots of journalism this is important because “throughout history, cultures have been generated by people sharing space and time”. (Castells 1998, 349) Carey (1997, 323-324) underlines the effects of the rupture in the socio-cultural basic settings upon the traditional communications system: “The integration of cable, satellite, and computer not only permitted but also imagined new conceptions of time and space, beyond those rooted in the national system...” According to Castells (1998, 350) we are moving towards a culture of “real virtuality” which “has emerged from the superseding of places and the annihilation of time”.

Out of all these profound changes there is emerging a new era where “industrial” as a basic concept describing our societies is no longer valid. Castells (ibid.) calls the society of the new era “the network society because it is made up of networks of production, power and experience, which construct a culture of virtuality in the global flows that transcend time and space”. Indeed, this society is remarkably different from the one that brought about journalism in the first place.

### 2.2.3 Implications for journalism

What has been said above about the trends in our society - about the emergence of the Information Society - has three aspects that are relevant to this study.

The first is that the emblem of society seems to be changing. Society no longer is described with symbols and icons of industry: chimneys, assembly lines, factories, but with those of information and knowledge: media, network, computer. Instead of straightforward and linear symbols like rails and telegraph lines, society is represented with illustrations like nets, nodes and interactivity. So pervasive is the networking logic that it has been proposed as a dominant framework for science: “The Atom is past. The symbol of science for the next century is the dynamical Net...” (Kelly 1995, quoted in Castells 1996, 61) Assessments may vary as to how far society actually has changed and whether it is justified to talk about the Information Society, but the themes of information society nevertheless seem to be setting the tone of the debate. In addition to this, analysis of the trends in (Western) societies indicates that changes are also taking place in the material basis of society from traditional industrial society towards an “informational” one. This change in the basic nature of society cannot be ignored in journalism research, which is trying to trace the change of its object.

Secondly, it is important to note that the social agents that are important to journalism - in this case public authorities, citizens, and publishers and other media owners - behave in such a way that the trends described earlier become and already are relevant to journalism. For instance, one can easily see

that the authorities in most, if not all, Western countries are encouraging, not to say enforcing efforts along the lines of the Information Society concept. From the G-7 countries through the EU to individual governments, the Information Society has been a keyword for development strategies. (see Castells 1996, 364-365; Dutton et al. 1996, 395-397) The Finnish government, for instance, has drawn up a national strategy called "Finland: towards an information society" where the rhetoric is saturated with positive attributions of computerising educational institutions from primary schools to universities, of networking the nation and of promoting information technology industry.

This Information Society rhetoric of public authorities on the international, national and also local level translates - through statutory regulation mechanisms - into funding of projects that, for instance, enhance citizens' access to information networks and their computer literacy. Quite understandably, citizens in their various roles such as employees, students and entrepreneurs direct their decisions and choices so that they can take advantage of the benefits offered by "information society policies". For instance, the employees (and at least in Finland, even the unemployed) upgrade their qualifications for information-related occupations, while entrepreneurs, tempted by available public subsidies, invest in communication technologies.

In the midst of these developments, publishers and other traditional media owners perceive the new communication media emerging as a possible threat to their businesses and at the same time as a possible promise of extending or diversifying their existing operations.

Thirdly, one must note the importance of new communication or information technology itself. As Castells (1998, 336-337) puts it: "The information technology revolution induced the emergence of informationalism, as the material foundation of a new society... Information technology became the indispensable tool for the effective implementation of processes of socio-economic restructuring." Thus, it can be said that the core of what is described as a path towards the Information Society is (communication) technological. This is not succumbing to technological determinism, but merely admitting "that some of the most significant changes in late twentieth-century society are those inherent in, related to, or consequent upon IT [information technology]" (Lyon 1995, 60). It is another matter altogether how any particular technology and society are related to one another: is technology shaping society, or do social needs direct the development of technology, and how is technology and in our case how are media born and how do they develop in the first place <sup>8</sup>. The important thing to note here is that in

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<sup>8</sup> One rather refreshing attitude is Castells's (1996, 5): "...the dilemma of technological determinism is probably a false problem, since technology *is* society, and society cannot be understood or represented without its technological tools." For more on the development of communication technology in society, see also e.g. Dutton 1996, Heap et al. 1995, Marvin 1988, Winston 1998 and 1995.

our present society, technological development, especially in the field of communications technology, is one of the most important social factors defining and shaping the social context of journalism.

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To conclude this brief excursion into the dawn of new society, I would like to point out certain parallels between the present - or rather coming - era and the era when journalism was invented. This is not to say that history is repeating itself, but there do seem to be certain familiar topics emerging: It seems that now, as in the era of industrialisation, the basic nature of society - on the level of metaphors - is changing; at the same time indisputable changes are occurring in the material basis of society; political and cultural spheres are also being reshaped; individual citizens have to re-orientate themselves; the central factor is new technology; technology is allowing for new types of communication. Of course it is possible to dismiss this account by saying that all these topics have always been forming journalism. However, it is my opinion that at the moment these developments have a stronger presence than usually, thus justifying the approach which questions the eternal nature of journalism by highlighting the elements of change.

## 3. The setting: The Internet, media and journalism

Having established in the previous chapter the social and variable nature of journalism and the journalistic profession, and having outlined the features of their social environment today, I will now move on to examine the relationship between one aspect of new communications technology, the Internet, and journalism. This chapter is based on a review of literature which describes how the “network of networks” has emerged or will be emerging as an important development of communications technology affecting media performance and conventions of the journalistic profession. In this way the chapter serves as a bridge from journalism’s historicity to my empirical studies on the effect of the Internet on journalism.

### 3.1 Prophecies and prototypes

Describing the effects of any ongoing technological development instead of past developments is always a delicate task. Since we do not have the benefit of historical distance, we are confined to contemporary materials with all their problems. As Stephens (1998, 9) writes: “It takes a long time to realise the potential of a new form of communications - much longer than those who are living through these changes expect.” Also, with more than a hint of sarcasm, Carey (e.g. 1989) has pointed out that along with new technologies there habitually appear visions of drastic changes in people’s lives, economy and society at large, changes that occur because of this specific new technology. It goes without saying that these changes are for the better, at least from the point of view of those advocating the new technology or who are profiting from it - which often is the same thing. For instance, talking about the “electronic revolution”, Carey describes how according to its advocates “electricity will overcome historical forces and political obstacles that prevented previous utopias” (ibid., 115). This inclination to decorate new technological products with social advancements is not new: Marvin (1988, 65) reminds us how in the nineteenth century it was predicted that the new technologies of communication would build better, i.e. more open and democratically accessible communities.

The Age of the Net is no exception in this regard: “Prophets of technology preach the new age, extrapolating to social trends and organization the



barely understood logic of computers...” (Castells 1996, 4) The icon of “the new age” is the Internet, which, among other things, will lead to the emergence of a “digital citizen” who is “optimistic, tolerant, civic-minded and radically committed to change” (Katz 1997, 68b). In *HotWired* (the digital version of the strongly pro-Internet magazine *Wired*) it has been claimed that “The Net can fight media corruption” (James Fellows says...1997). Elsewhere it has been declared, on the basis of a national survey carried out in the USA, that “[new communication] technology may hold the key to win back America’s trust” (Survey shows...1996). This rhetoric of today’s absorbing new media is abundant in these “prophecies” (Carey 1989, 113, see also Jones 1998, xii-xiii), and there clearly is an element of technological determinism present. The Internet is presented as something that is a result of “...paths of technological change [which] are inevitable and necessitate particular social changes” (Williams and Edge 1996, 55). The rhetoric draws a picture of something already shaped, a clear phenomenon with identifiable and significant consequences in media and journalism.

However, at this stage in the development of the relationship between the Internet and journalism, I think one should adopt a somewhat more cautious approach. It is not yet clear how profound effects the Internet will have on society or journalism. Winston (1998, 1995) makes a distinction between preinventions or prototypes and inventions. A technological innovation is only a prototype until a social necessity transforms it into something really applicable in society. In the case of the Internet I interpret this to mean that although the technical solutions are available for journalistic applications on the Internet, two “societies” still have to bring out the social necessity: the “society” of media personnel, including owners, managers and journalists, and the “society” of audience, or users in Internet terminology. These “societies” will give the social shaping (see Edge 1995; Williams and Edge 1996) for the Internet as a journalistic means.

### 3.2 Characteristics of Internet communication

In any discussion of the Internet in relation to journalism, it is necessary to define which Internet we are talking about. This does not mean dwelling on the general history and development of the Internet, on which there exists abundant material. However, it is important to clarify our perspective towards the Internet - in a sense establish how we are talking about it. This is necessary because of the complexity of the concept of “internet”, which may refer to several things.

On one level, the Internet is just another technology. In purely technical and organisational terms, the Internet is a global network of information networks. Its features can be reduced to technical concepts and its significance can be expressed by reference to band-widths and similar concepts. On another level, the Internet is an expression of somewhat contradictory communicative aspirations. Its background in this sense explains why journalism finds it difficult to settle into the Net environment. The Internet resulted from the combined efforts of the “military/science establishment and the personal computing counterculture” (Castells 1996, 355). On the one hand the network technology was developed for such purposes as securing US military communications, but on the other hand the success of the Internet has been the result of enthusiastic computer nerds striving for alternative communication channels. In this setting, the preferences of traditional journalism were not present.

Yet another way to see the Internet is to look at its functions. The term “internet” is often used to refer to the entity of various services available via the Internet. As we know, the Internet “provides an array of tools for people to use for information retrieval and communication in individual, group and mass contexts” (December 1996, 14) from electronic mail to real-time television programmes. And to strengthen this multi-pattern nature of the Internet one must remember that “behind this diversity of services...lie very different patterns of information traffic” from one-to-one communication to broadcasting (Jensen 1998, 5).

Despite this ambiguity, it is possible to distinguish a number of characteristics that define Internet communication and that are relevant to the study of journalism. These features, based on recent developments in communications technology, form the basis of the Internet as a journalistic utility. I find that the following six features of Internet communication are relevant in the context of this study: that information on the Internet is in digital form; that communication is computer-mediated; that communication takes place in information network(s); that there is a possibility of interactive communication; that on the World Wide Web of the Internet it is possible to use hypertext in presentations; and that the use of Internet technology is becoming easier all the time. (Table 3.1). Although these may seem an eclectic mixture of technical features underlying information networks, properties of interfaces and characteristics of related end-user apparatus, this inventory opens an appropriate angle on an otherwise very confusing phenomenon, as I will try to show in the following.

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Nature</b>
digital information	all types of content are in the form of ones and zeros
computerisation	information processing, sending and receiving is carried out with computers
networking	communication takes places in interconnected information networks
interactivity	communication flow is twoway, blurring the distinction between sender and receiver
hypertextuality	content elements can be linked to each other, enabling multi-layered products
usability	communication tools and procedures are (relatively) easy

*Table 3.1. Characteristics of Internet communication*

That all information, regardless of its nature, is digital, is the very basic feature of all so-called new media, whether that means CD-ROM's, digital video discs or web-publications. Many bold words have been said about the blessing of digitalisation for humankind<sup>1</sup>, and for instance Fidler (1997, 78) exclaims that "the development of digital language is likely to have a profound transformational effect on human society...". This is because digital symbols are "far more abstract and precise than words or letters" (Lacy 1996, 125) and digitised information "can be copied very fast and infinitely", with "digital copies always being as good as the original" (Hintikka 1996, 4).

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<sup>1</sup> One of the boldest presentations of digitalisation is Negroponte 1996.

The most interesting feature of digital information, however, is that it is insensitive to the nature of the information. It is not important “what individual bits and bytes represent in the real world as long as they are properly constituted for the digital one” (Feldman 1997, 8). For this reason digital information, in this case information communicated via the Internet, can be multi-media. From the journalistic point of view this creates a possibility of presentations which integrate “data, text, sound and images of all kinds within a single, digital information environment” (ibid., 24). This opens up new avenues in content-producing as well as in receiving. When information is in digital form, it is possible freely to process and combine various content elements. On the other hand, in the reception of digital information it is possible - at least in principle - to decide whether to consume it in voice, text or image via loudspeakers, paper or on-screen. (Hintikka 1996, 6).

Computers are the spinning wheels or machine tools of this digital information. Although computers are basically sophisticated calculating machines, “the computer is also an information technology and a medium of communication” (Strate et al. 1996, 7). When computers were first brought into newsrooms they were used for word-processing, replacing typewriters<sup>2</sup> - and in many cases this is still the case today. But computers as individual workstations are nowadays capable of far more challenging tasks: they can be used to process whatever information has been digitised, be it images, sound or merely text. In addition, the communicative features of computers have expanded: you can find CD-ROM players, telefax and television and video connections in ordinary home computers. Computers may now be described as “media-stations” equipped with numerous features of communication. (Hintikka 1996, 5) Practically all journalists in the Western world now use computers in their work, albeit often in a quite limited way, but the important thing is that the tool needed for digital information is there.

Perhaps an even more important feature of computers than their capability to process digital information, is their ability to establish contact with remote information resources. As Lacy (1996, 134) sees it, “...the extraordinary heuristic power of computer has had an equally revolutionary effect through the dramatic increase in our technological power to find information...and arrange and manipulate it in ways that make possible its far more effective use”. It is here that information networks enter the scene.

Isolated computers or even those operating in local area networks (as is usually the case in newsrooms) are not capable of reaching any other information that is not already within the newsroom. Similarly, they cannot send digital journalistic products to the general audience. Access to the outside

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<sup>2</sup> For a revealing account of the early days of computers in newsrooms, see Winsbury 1976.

world has to be established through information networks. According to December (1996, 20-21) "...the salient function of a computer as used for communication is not to provide computational capability, but to provide a platform for the operating system and software applications to support network data transmission and user applications". Although this may again reflect a somewhat one-sided view of computers at least in journalistic use, it is true that the main value of the Internet (also) for journalists lies in its networking nature.

Again, there are certain technical solutions behind this characteristic of Internet communication. In order to make all the computers connected in the Internet "understand" one another, digital information must conform to IP data communications protocol. This protocol makes the Internet a common ground to which many other online networks are also connected through gateways. And it is this that makes the Internet global. (December 1996, 17-20) Being connected or "wired" to a world-wide network of networks opens up whole new communication possibilities for users. One of them is that geographical distance is no longer the severe communication hindrance it used to be because users - among them journalists - can at least in principle obtain information from anywhere. Correspondingly, any journalistic product published on the Internet has a potentially global audience. Another aspect is that at least so far, the Internet has remained open. Provided that the user possesses certain material and intellectual properties, communication on the Internet is basically on a free-flow basis in the sense that anyone can publish material there. Compared to traditional media, the Internet offers far cheaper and easier means for establishing alternative media outlets.

The third possibility opened up by global networks brings us to another feature of the Internet: "Networks can also offer the capacity for users not only to communicate simultaneously with a body of information [such as an online newspaper -A.H.] but also to communicate among themselves." (Feldman 1997, 6) This is possible because communication on the Internet is two-way traffic, in other words interactive. In this kind of communication environment it is less clear than in traditional journalism who is the sender and who is the receiver. "This capability adds a striking new dimension to the present mass-media pattern of one-way products from a centralized source", Strate et al. (1994, 4) say and add: "It permits consumers to query, challenge, and modify media output." (ibid.)

Because Internet users may challenge the media output and create their own contents in the same environment, the Internet disposes of the traditional model of journalism where the journalist makes the news and a wide audience receives it as it stands at about the same time. On the Internet the news can be created by anyone and others can comment on it and check its accuracy (Hintikka 1996, 7). This can be seen as a "movement away from strongly asymmetric, centralistic power structures and in the direction of a

greater symmetry in the distribution of power” (Jensen 1998, 11) in communication. If realised, this most certainly has consequences for the media and journalism which “have been able to dictate what customers will view or read with only a modicum of selectivity left to the customer’s discretion” (Feldman 1997, 4).

In addition to this informational dimension, interactivity makes the Internet a communication-based instrument of community-building. The Internet is “a means of creating a new form of electronic community, a grouping of people whose geographic location is irrelevant and who are instead drawn together by the common thread of the network they all use” (Feldman 1997, 6). In this framework of communication, journalism may be non-existent.

If interactivity is a feature of Internet communication that is ambiguous from the point of view of journalism, hypertextuality and usability are characteristics that have attracted journalistic institutions to the Internet. Hypertext brings to digital documents another important new dimension apart from multimediality, namely depth (Fidler 1997, 43). Referring “to nonlinear documents in which text nodes are linked to other relevant pieces of text, forming a textual network” (Strate et al. 1996, 10), hypertextuality means that Internet communication allows for the production and consumption of products that differ in a significant way from traditional newspaper articles and television programmes. When for instance a news piece in a newspaper is constructed with the (right or wrong) assumption of linear consumption (from the headline through the lead to the body, etc.), the production of hypertext documents presupposes that the user can utilise the hyperlinks to step inside the story (for contextual or detailed information), to jump temporarily outside of the story (for external information from perhaps the other side of the globe) and/or to consume the story in a non-linear way (by using sequence links of the story) and to change the mode of reception if there is audio and/or video material available.

The last remark again reminds us that in digital communication, the type of information is not important, so a link or a text-node “can include any type of text - words, graphics, moving images, sound, or any combination of these” (ibid.). This is often called hypermedia, and from the journalistic point of view it offers interesting possibilities in converging the presentation methods of divergent media.

Stepping back a little, it should be noted that hypertext in itself was not a sufficiently appealing tool to attract journalistic publishers to the Internet. The underlying technical solutions (hypertext transfer protocol, HTTP) made it possible to create relatively conveniently textual documents which were linked together in a system that is known as the World Wide Web, but few others than committed Internet users were interested. “...the Web in its early days was as unfriendly and complex to use as the Internet had always been”, and something else was needed to make Internet communication attractive

and usable. This something was “...the creation of an easy-to-use, graphical point and click window through which anyone can navigate and view the Web”, i.e. a graphical Web browser. (Feldman 1997, 113) Contemporary browsers allow content producers as well as consumers easily to utilise the hypertextual and hypermedia characteristics of the Internet. As a consequence, the number of Internet users has within a relatively short space of time increased several times over, and along with the masses the journalistic media have also discovered the Internet.

### 3.3. Issues for journalism

The development of the Internet from an often cumbersome, text-only communication means of a few committed experts to a graphical, easy-to-use interactive instrument accessible to almost anyone, greatly enhanced its potential as a technological innovation from a journalistic point of view as well. Since the mid-90s the Internet, and the World Wide Web in particular, has been an issue in journalism giving rise to multifaceted and often confusing debate especially among newspapers. The debate can be reviewed by distinguishing in it three emerging patterns: First, we can look at the question of the Internet as a publishing medium. This has been the dominant thread in the debate on the Internet’s potentialities from the point of view of journalism. In it, the emphasis has largely been on the future role of traditional media institutions in changing the communications business, with important reflections on the journalistic profession. The second thread is the promise that the Internet can empower journalists in their work. This argumentation deals mostly with the new tools of journalists, such as improved means of information gathering. Finally, there is the important issue of the Internet’s effect on the journalist’s professional role, including topics like journalistic skills, the relationship between journalists and the audience and journalistic ethics. Although these themes are in practice intertwined (for instance, online publishing requires certain new journalistic skills), for analytical reasons it is useful to treat them separately. Starting from the business perspective (publishing) and proceeding through the newsroom angle (empowerment) to the profession’s identity (role), I shall present in this chapter a concise but hopefully illuminating account of these issues that the Internet has raised within and for journalism. Following the scope of the study, the review is focused on newspaper journalism.

### 3.3.1 Publishing on the Internet

The advent of the Internet as a journalistic publishing medium coincided with a problematic era for the newspaper industry. A report to the European Commission has described the situation by stating bluntly that “print markets are stagnating and in long-term decline”, and that “if newspapers want to regain growth...they have to enter new areas and ventures” (Strategic developments... 1996, 17; see also *The Future of...* 1998, 37-38 for the situation in Europe, and Dizard 1997, 167-180 for newspapers in the USA). Newspapers’ problems had and have many dimensions, such as reduced advertising revenues, changing life-styles of potential readers, a loosening grip on people’s everyday life, a credibility gap and so on, but the important thing in this context is that the Internet appeared into the field in the conditions of turmoil. It seemed that for newspapers, the Internet was at once a threat and an opportunity.

On the one hand the Internet is bad news for newspapers. This is because it is set to create new competition for an industry already struggling with traditional electronic media and other problems indicated above. The Internet brings in on newspapers’ turf new enterprises and/or new alliances of old rivals and newcomers, unsettling the traditional positions in the field. The Internet is open for instance to communications companies (such as telecoms), computer software and hardware entrepreneurs, and various retail companies (Strategic developments...1996, 313). These agents and their alliances are establishing their presence on the Internet by producing contents and offering a multitude of online services. The threat for newspapers is that other actors will try to reach the audience/customers directly, by-passing traditional mediators and so destroying their source of revenues: “...the Web is where new competitors can try to get through the fence and to grab both readers and advertisers [from newspapers]” (Read 1998). In this way newspapers as businesses face the threat of “disintermediation” (Sparks 1996, 50), with the same fate looming for newspaper journalism.

In addition to this, the Internet gives the audience the opportunity to by-pass newspapers. According to Bardoel (1996, 287) interactive services may provide an incentive for increased horizontal communication between citizens instead of vertical communication, where journalism has traditionally been a central mediator. A citizen can also become a publisher because “the genius and triumph of the Internet...is the fact that the humblest home page is as accessible as the slickest corporate site” (Lasica 1996, /ajrjd6.html). Again the question of who needs journalistic institutions is raised because of the Internet.

It is hardly surprising then that newspapers have reacted. According to a survey by the World Association of Newspapers, newspaper executives worldwide consider “the Internet and electronic publishing the most important



strategic issues for their organisations” (The Future of...1998, 59). Newspapers are by no means alone. Dahlgren (1996, 60) sees something resembling a gold rush climate in how “journalistic institutions, specifically news organisations...have all seen cyberspace as a crucial dimension for their future”. It has been noted that often this rush to the Eldorado called the Internet has happened with rather vague ideas of the cost-effectiveness of the exercise, or even a clear idea of what is the purpose of the action. However, there seem to be two types of possibilities that newspapers have thought the Internet can offer them. The first one is based mainly on the newspaper business aspect and the second one has to do with the prospects of the Internet for developing newspaper journalism.

The business rationale for newspapers’ online efforts is often based on the threat scenario of their continuing to lose ground in the media field because of new online competition. From around the early or mid-90s, loud voices have been declaring that “newspapers and television were on the brink of being replaced by new, interactive services delivered over the global Internet” (Caruso 1997, 32). Newspapers launched a counter-offensive by investing in the Internet in order to defend the potential markets of the future (Hedman 1998, 179; Dahlgren 1996, 60). At the same time the Internet appeared as a possible way of making more out of existing investments and resources. As regards journalism, this thinking is highlighted in the slogan “write once, publish many”, uttered in so many publishers’ conventions. The idea is that newspapers should not dedicate the output (i.e. journalism) produced by their content producers (i.e. journalists) to a print product only, but they should re-use it on the Internet. In this way the Internet opened a vision for “the transformation of newspaper publishing from a separate and independent enterprise into one of the products of multi-media production houses” (The Future of...1998, 7; see also Bowser 1998). At the same time, the Internet was also seen as a possible way of cutting newspapers’ printing and distribution costs (Sparks 1996 46-47).

On the other hand, although newspapers’ presence on the Internet has so far largely been based on the idea of recycling the contents of a printed newspaper to an Internet publication<sup>3</sup>, journalistic expectations for going online have existed all along with business expectations in the debate on newspapers and the Internet. For instance, it has been said that the Internet

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<sup>3</sup> Many online versions of newspapers fully deserve the description of “shovelware”, indicating how newspapers have been “trying to walk the old-fashioned model of newspapering into cyberspace” (Lasica 1996, /ajrjd16.html). Especially the first online newspapers contained hardly any new or original material, interactivity or other features enabled by the communicative features of the Internet (Katz 1997a; Shaw 1997, /2diffs.htm). The Internet has been considered simply as another distribution channel for traditional newspaper journalism.

gives newspaper journalism new possibilities for journalistic presentation because the distinctive features of Internet communication allow also newspapers to use audio, video, hypertext and other Internet features. (Dahlgren 1996, 64-67; Quittner 1995) In this way the Internet adds new dimensions to newspaper journalism that are not present with the combination of text and still-photos only.

Another temptation of online publishing is the possibility to refresh the staled relationship with the audience. In this the interactivity of Internet communication has a central role. Since it is a conventional wisdom that “the one thing that is consistently high on their [Internet users’ -A.H.] priorities is sharing and exchanging information and ideas with other people” (Feldman 1997, 126), it has been assumed that newspapers on the Internet should also take this into account. Applications of interactivity in online publishing are numerous, ranging from simple online polling to diversified common discussion groups of journalists and readers.

Interactivity can help to improve the relationship with the audience also by way of strengthening the community-building aspect of newspaper journalism. Based on the traditional role of newspapers in their communities, it has been recommended that “online media need to look at their mission as more than providing news and information. They need to look at their historic role in the community”. (Lasica 1996, /ajrjd18.html) In a way this is a reaction to citizens’ horizontal communication on the Internet often based on communities of interest rather than on the quest for news. The strategy for newspapers has been that in addition to their contents intended for the general audience, they should “use technology’s new tools to reach out to...communities, to ignite civic discussion of topics important to the community, to bring people together and help them overcome the sense of isolation” (ibid.).

One important keyword in trying to (re-)reach the audience is what is called personalised journalism - even though this may sound like a contradiction in terms. What is meant by this is that utilising the communicative features of the Internet, journalistic web-sites can be so designed that they “will allow news consumers to understand the meaning of the day’s events in a personalised context that makes better sense to them than traditional media now” (Pavlik 1997, 30). Several technological innovations from push-technology (see e.g. Lasica 1997) to online newspapers that allow customised front-pages and sections have been created for filtering the daily news spectrum according to the reader’s individual preferences. Naturally the production of news follows normal “bulk” production principles, and personalisation is possible only to the extent that an individual user may choose which parts of the general supply he or she wants to receive. Another word for personalising is targeting, which perhaps better describes the fact that when publishers learn the habits of their readers (personal profiles can be and are

collected by publishers), they can sell to advertisers better defined customer groups. From the publishers' point of view, this kind of adaptivity is a rather valuable new feature offered by the Internet.

Newspaper ventures on the Internet have often tended to consider the two spheres separately: there is print journalism and there is online journalism. This attitude is often reflected in organisational arrangements so that editorial staffs for the print and online publications work in isolation from each other. However, synergy between print and online journalism may be one advantage that the Internet brings to newspapers. Having practically no space limits and being at the same time real-time and timeless (because of digital archiving), the Internet broadens newspapers' capabilities to free its journalism from the technical limitations of a print product. (see e.g. Gillmor 1998)

### 3.3.2 Empowering journalists

Turning our attention from the institutional level of journalism to practising journalists going about their daily tasks, it is possible to analyse the potentialities of the Internet on the newsroom level. But before discussing this, it must be noted that online tools have been available (also) for journalists even before the Internet entered the newsrooms. The classic work in the field, Koch's "Journalism in the 21st century - Online information, electronic databases and the news" was published as early as 1991. At that time the Internet was by no means such a "network of networks"; indeed the term "internet" does not even appear in the book's index. In spite of this, the book argues that "the marriage of computers and online libraries creates a radically new technology that will fundamentally alter the relations between writer and news subject" (Koch 1991, xiii). And as early as the 1980s at least some newsrooms were using various online news services.

The Internet considerably improved the usability of information networks - of course not only but also from the point of journalists. World Wide Web browsers offered much more user-friendly interfaces than earlier networks, greatly increasing the amount of available information. And most of the information on the Internet is free, unlike the products of specialised online services. At the same time, new means of communication were made available to journalists, creating novel or alternative working practices. This development is also reflected in a wave of tutorial books published for journalists about how to use the Internet in their work. An illustrative example of this genre is Reddick's and King's book from 1995: "The online journalist - Using the Internet and other electronic resources". As in Koch's book, the catchword "online" is in the title, but now meaning specifically the Internet. The book introduces the various services of the Internet from electronic mail through Telnet to the World Wide Web and - admitting that the Internet was

at that time still in its infancy - states that "the Internet provides journalists with immense information" and that it "provides a method for journalists to locate and communicate with their human sources" (Reddick and King 1995, 56).

Condensing from the literature on the Internet as a journalist's tool (see Brooks 1997, Houston 1995, Matteoni 1997, Mäkimattila 1998, Reddick and King 1995), it can be argued that in principle the Internet can be used throughout the journalistic work process. In the ideation phase the journalist can surf around the Internet examining web-sites, viewing discussion groups and probing mailing lists. When actually gathering information, the journalist can use various services available on the Web such as other media, search engines and the often searchable archives of different institutions. In this phase the communication features of the Internet can also be used: for instance, information can be acquired by e-mail. Electronic mail can also be used when writing and editing the story for checking facts and getting quickly additional information. Even real-time discussion services (chat) of the Internet can be used for gathering material. Finally, there is of course the publishing feature of the Internet for the final product.

From this variety of uses in the journalist's work one can distinguish three basic dimensions. First, the Internet can be seen as an information resource that offers journalists hitherto inaccessible sources as well as new means to use existing ones in novel ways. Judging by the volumes dealing with the Internet as a journalistic resource, this is by far the most important benefit of the Internet for journalists' work. As Dahlgren (1996, 67) describes somewhat admiringly, "with the powerful search engines now available, a journalist can quickly find much of the information he or she is looking for in a very short time". This remark highlights one particular feature of online information gathering, namely the speed of information networks. In spite of the increasing congestion on the lines, the Internet has a clear advantage over, say, ordinary mail or facsimile. Another advantage is the Internet's global reach, which makes it reasonable to widen the scope of information gathering even across continents. In addition to this, the journalist may have direct and relatively convenient access to the original documents of the sources when institutions (public and private, local, national and international, conventional and unorthodox) make them available on the Internet.

The overall result of these benefits of the Internet in journalistic information gathering is supposedly the improvement of journalists' standing in relation to their sources. Koch (1991, xxiii) argues (although referring not to the Internet but to the information networks of the time), that "online data technologies empower writers and reporters by providing them with information equal to or greater than that possessed by the public or private officials they are assigned to interview". In this sense the Internet can be regarded as an aid for journalists in the combat for news management, where

the phenomenon known as the professionalisation of sources has meant that journalists without proper information of the issues at hand are highly susceptible to dis- and misinformation (see Luostarinen 1995). With the Internet journalists do not necessarily have to rely on the interpretations of spokespersons or other institutional sources, at least not without the possibility to check the original documents themselves, or to verify or dispute information from alternative sources. "Statements made at a press conference or in a news release become...hypotheses to be examined in a broader context and with reference to impartial data chosen not solely by the subject but also by the newswriter" (Koch 1991, 320). Naturally, the precondition is that sources use the Internet for enhancing access to original information.

Secondly, the Internet provides certain new tools for actual reporting understood in the sense of carrying out field assignments. In this respect the keyword is connectivity: a reporter on an assignment can deliver material to the newsroom via the Internet, and on the other hand receive information on the spot from the newsroom (from editors and digital archives alike) as well as from other sources, including information resources available on the Internet, and comments from the audience. The vision embedded in this is that instead of being lone riders far away from their colleagues and audience, reporters would "attend news events and conferences with a laptop, digital camera and cellular modem, and their reports are published online. Readers can send e-mail to the correspondent at the site, making requests or suggestions" (Lasica 1996, /ajrjd18.html).

At the same time, the mobility of reporters would be enhanced because all the necessary equipment is portable and even wearable. This, in turn, makes it possible to free journalists from their confinement in newsrooms and to let them work in the field - or at home. The other result, as indicated in the quote above, is that reporting becomes faster. Newspaper journalism may also become instant reporting with online web-cameras and constant news feeds to online publications. Although the technical equipment needed in this kind of scenario is still rather bulky, research and development is very intensive (see Bass 1998, Northrup 1998, Raouf 1998b, and the MIT Wearable Computing Web Page at <<http://wearables.media.mit.edu/projects/wearables/>>). To a certain extent these features are now being introduced in the practice of journalism (see Pavlik 1999, Sirkkunen and Kuusisto 1999).

The third dimension of the Internet's effect on the reporter's daily work has to do with the interactional possibilities of the Internet. Although this is in a sense embedded in the former two dimensions, it deserves to be highlighted as a separate issue due to its implications for the journalist's professional role. Being a two-way channel of information, the Internet offers for journalists a means "to get various kinds of feedback from the public, such as direct comments on journalistic endeavours as well as more market-oriented canvassing of audiences" (Dahlgren 1996, 68). Similarly, journalists

can communicate with sources, official as well as alternative ones, obtaining information in the form of text or even audio and video. The main consequence of this interactivity is that it tends to break the isolation of the journalistic work process, from which the audience in particular is traditionally excluded. Almost-real-time comments about the story from the audience or reactions from the sources directly to the journalist's personal e-mail box add an interactional dimension to the journalist's work.

Interactivity can also be attached to the journalistic work process in the sense that it creates new kind of journalism. As Feldman (1997, 20) notes, "...interactivity is generating new forms of media products which rely fundamentally on interactivity as the basis of their appeal". In the sphere of journalism the concept of interactional news sounds rather unconventional because the news has traditionally been the exclusive property of journalists. However, the Internet makes possible a news product where the audience is also present in producing the story by sending comments, information and other input. In this way interactivity may result in a journalistic work process where the journalist's performance is but one element in the report of a news event (Heinonen 1997a, 49-52).

### 3.3.3 Journalist's professional role

Closely related to the above issues of publishing on the Internet and the working practices of journalists are those that the Internet raises with regard to the professional role of journalists. It is possible to distinguish at least the following four dimensions in this respect. Firstly, the Internet raises questions about the position of journalists as intermediators of information. Secondly, connected to the previous topic, there is the question of journalists' relationship with the audience. Thirdly, there is the question of skills requirements for journalists in the era of real-time, interactive, multimedia journalism. Fourth and finally, the Internet with its new features of communication and new ways of interacting with the audience is bound to put journalistic ethics on the agenda for possible review.

As regards the journalist's role as an information mediator, the basic motive for the potential change is the open nature of the Internet. All the communication characteristics of the Internet that were discussed earlier are available to the general public as well as to the sources of journalism. As was indicated earlier, journalists and media are relative late-comers to Internet communication, and this is perhaps why the Internet often appears as a rather hostile environment for journalism. Lasica (1996, /ajrjdomain.html) notes that "a great many of the Internet's...users consider Old Media's practice of top-down, father-knows-best journalism to be...irrelevant to their lives. And, in an age when anyone with a computer and modem can be a virtual reporter,

they're right". This bears upon the very essence of the profession's existence: "Will professional journalists be needed in an era when people can get their news 'unfiltered'?" (ibid., /ajrjd1.html).

Two aspects are intertwined in these kinds of exclamations about journalism and the Internet. One is dissatisfaction on the part of the audience with the performance of journalism and journalists, which has recently been a top issue in professional debate especially in the USA (see e.g. the "credibility project" of the American Society of Newspaper Editors at <<http://www.asne.org/works/jcp/credibility.htm>>). The other one is the actual possibility to by-pass what is experienced as an annoying "interpretation by the intervening journalist" (Lasica 1996, /ajrjd2.html). The aim is to break down the one-dimensional pipeline source-journalist-audience, and the Internet is the device to do this. "Never before have so many people been able to reach exactly the information they were looking for, with the depth and detail that they desired at the moment they wanted it" (The Future of...1998, 40). Inevitably, this is at least potentially undermining the journalist's position, because "he is no longer the ultimate gatekeeper, the person with sole power to decide what information will reach the public" which means that "the journalist...is 'dis-intermediated', no longer essential in the chain from event or source to information consumers" (ibid.).

More moderate visions presume that although the journalist's authority may be shaken, there will still be a place for mediated communication such as journalism. One reason is the amount of time that people have (or actually don't have) at their disposal: "...casual online users want their news tamed, filtered and summarised, quickly and cleanly. They don't have time to play reporter" (Lasica 1996, /ajrjd8.html). In this way the audience is still expected to be "happy to empower someone else to take on the chore of filtering the chaos of daily life and packaging it" (Delano 1996, 6). However, these visions also include the prospect of enhanced transparency in journalism because journalists and the audience have equal access to sources. Since journalists are no longer indispensable links between the sources and the audience, "they must prove their position in this respect" (Bardoel 1996, 295), in other words, journalists must somehow show that their professionalism is useful for the audience.

The re-positioning of journalists in the communication process has to do with the relationship of journalists and the audience, which is the second issue with regard to the effects of the Internet on the role of journalists. The starting point is presented by the conventions of traditional journalism: "One of the news media's most burdensome habits is the unwillingness to enter into a true dialogue with their readers" (Lasica 1996, /ajrjd17.html). This is in accordance with the detaching professional identity that has been cultivated by journalists throughout the profession's history. The audience is somewhere out there, and although in professional rhetoric journalists are serv-

ants of the audience, this commitment does not seem to include communication between journalists and the audience, which is rather limited. The standard way offered for members of the audience to communicate with journalists is the letters-to-the-editor section. Journalists tend to be invisible and unreachable.

Part of “proving journalists’ position” in Internet communication is that this situation will be altered using the interactional features of the Internet. “...interactivity menaces the relationship that has until now been conceded, however grudgingly, between journalistic producer and consumer” (Delano 1996, 4). One aspect of this is becoming exposed and accessible as a journalist to the audience. This means actions that are technically modest but far-reaching in principle, such as attaching journalists’ personal e-mail addresses to articles. This creates a direct communication bridge between the author of the news and its consumer, possibly shifting communication from the mass media level to the point-to-point communication level. This requires more personal involvement from the side of journalists.

The other aspect is that journalists admit that the traditional gatekeeper role is no longer feasible and adapt a new kind of attitude towards the audience. If and when there are competing information providers reaching the audience in the new communication environment, and if and when the audience can check the facts for themselves, “the gatekeepers need new jobs” (Lasica 1996, /ajrjd13). As Bardoel (1996, 297) sees it, “the traditional task of journalism will evolve from sending messages to offering orientation to the citizen and the emphasis will shift from ‘content’ to ‘context’”. This implies considerable changes in the journalist’s role: instead of being a conveyor of individual pieces of information, journalists should offer contextualised and explanatory material.

Another perspective for journalists to serve the public in a new role is to step down from the position of dominating the public agenda in the media itself and allow room for horizontal communication among the audience. This means letting the audience into the sphere that has traditionally been exclusive to professionals. In this setting, the task of journalists would be to moderate citizen discussion and facilitate it with material using their professional journalistic skills - and also to participate in the debate with the audience. As a US media person describes this role: “We bring topics to the table, we focus discussion that’s already there, we talk and listen, we gather up what we have found and put it in perspective, we add what our expertise and special resources allow us” (cited in Lasica 1996, /ajrjd13.html). This approach would imply that journalists understand that in a network society, the audience is constructed differently than in industrial society. Instead of (nationally) wide and relatively homogenous audiences, Net audiences may be fragmented and not willing to be positioned as mere receivers.



Thirdly, there is the issue of the journalistic skills that are needed in order to master the new information gathering, reporting and interaction tools and methods. It is unavoidable that on one level, the Internet in journalistic practice is very much a technical phenomenon. The communicative features of the Internet can be put to use in journalism only by way of accepting the fact that new technological “gadgets and gizmos” are needed and because of this, journalists have to adopt new skills. That new technology requires new skills and that these lead to changes in journalism is by no means characteristic of the present time only. Bearing in mind the importance of telegraph or television, we may say that in many cases changes in journalism are decisively affected by some kind of technological innovation with related occupational skills (see Delano 1996, 7).

The set of new skills required of journalists in the age of the Internet can roughly be grouped into three categories along the lines described earlier. Firstly, there are those skills that are related to information gathering. These include understanding how to create useful search criteria and strategies, mastering various Web-based search engines, and so on. Secondly, there are those skills that are related to mastering various kinds of equipment that are or will become available for reporting. Mastering digital still cameras, digital video cameras, laptops with modems and technical communication procedures are skills that are needed in online reporting. And lastly, “...making use of the medium [the Internet] to publish newspapers also requires a completely new set of skills, one that at this point few journalists have” (The Future of... 1998, 8). These publishing skills include understanding web-publishing software, html-code, multimedia editing equipment and software, and so on. If we add to these three technically oriented skills the need to master the interaction process with the audience, which is more a social rather than a technological skill, it can be said that the Internet certainly entails a greater challenge in terms of upgrading journalistic skills than the switch-over from manual typewriters to electronic ones, for instance.

It is important to note that the new skills required by the Internet do not replace traditional journalistic skills, such as the ability to identify news and to write well; the skills requirements are augmented. This creates a vision of the journalist “doing it all”, as Harper (1996) points out on the basis of observations of the working practices of an online newspaper: “The reporters write stories, take pictures, operate video cameras and even create digital pages.” For journalism education this vision is particularly challenging, bearing in mind that most of the media still are off-line. The answer seems to lie in the principle of cross-training journalism students with basic capabilities of all media (see Raouf 1998b). This is quite a noteworthy prospect with regard to the journalist’s professional role because traditionally journalists tend to identify themselves with a particular medium.

The last issue regarding the journalist's professional role is the ethics of journalism. That ethics is an issue to be discussed at all in this connection is not necessarily clear because in principle, journalistic ethics does not depend on the medium but is universal. And if we were to take it seriously that journalism in the age of the Internet is "the same old journalism" (see Koch 1991, xv) with slightly different tools and somewhat different practices, then there would be no point in talking about ethics at all. However, it makes more sense to start out from the position that each new communication technology does have some influence on ethical issues. According to Cooper (1998, 82) the newest communication technology (not only the Internet) may, for instance, amplify existing ethical issues, or it may reveal new ones, or present mixtures of old and new ones. In addition, the implementation of for instance self-regulatory sanctions in the form of codes of conduct may become increasingly difficult "when the technologies, participants, servers, and vendors in a global (multi-) medium represent numerous languages, ethical mores, and transient sites with no central control point" (ibid., 73).

Exactly what the ethical effects might be in the case of the Internet must be left open in this discussion, but it is worth noting that the issue again has two sides to it. On the one hand the Internet is usually presented as an originator of new ethical problems. A frequent topic in the debate of the Internet and journalism ethics is that of privacy. New ways of information gathering (e.g. an online web-camera in a public place) may place citizens under constant surveillance in a global mass medium. Perhaps an even more delicate question is the ability of the publishers to monitor individuals' media usage and create intimate user profiles. These can be used for the benefit of advertising and marketing. Another recurring topic is manipulation; digital technology makes it possible to create material of events that have never taken place. Aided by the Internet, these manipulated messages can be instantaneously distributed globally. Yet another ethical problem raised especially in connection with online publishing is the distinction of editorial and commercial material, which some commentators say is becoming increasingly blurred. Furthermore, there is the question of the proper usage of the material, which refers not only to copyright problems but also to presenting material out of its original context. These issues have already been widely discussed in relation to the Internet. (Cooper 1998; The Future of... 1998, 8; Pavlik 1998)

On the other hand, Internet communication has features that may have positive effects from the point of journalism ethics. For instance, "the interactivity the Internet allows also makes the journalist far more accessible to the public" (The Future of... 1998, 44). This may lead to increasing audience activity in pointing to and correcting mistakes, even commenting and challenging journalism. The hypertextual possibilities in storytelling in the online medium allow journalists to exhibit their sources and original material

to the audience. This is conducive to more transparent journalism in the sense that journalists publish not only the final result of their work, but also the process and the raw material underlying it. "...this makes the medium much more accountable towards its audience" (ibid.).

## 4. The vision: Four views on the Net and journalism

Having now traced the evolution of journalism and set that evolution in the context of the Information Society and the Internet, I now move on to the more mundane sphere of journalism. This chapter brings together the results of four empirical research projects which have looked into the Internet's relations with and effects on journalism from the point of view of the practice of journalism and the Internet. Reflecting the issues raised earlier, the work reported here illustrates how the issue of the Internet is actually considered to be influencing journalism and the journalistic profession.

In a summarising presentation here, I first give the floor to editors of Finnish newspapers, who consider the implications of the Internet to the future of newspaper journalism. The second view is that of newspaper reporters, who will have their say about how the Internet is affecting journalism from their perspective. These views represent the expertise of traditional journalism. Next, we move on to another group of experts who have a somewhat different position vis-à-vis new communications technology: these are new media experts, although many of them also have experience of journalism in traditional media. The last element in this discussion is based on an analysis of the contents of online publications. I present my conclusions from this analysis with regard to the new opportunities opened up by the Internet for journalistic expression and the new skills required of the professional journalist.

The purpose of my excursion is to try and enrich the debate on journalism in the Age of the Net with substances that are all practically oriented but that reflect different perspectives. The view constructed out of the assessments of newspaper editors brings forward the position of strategic professionals of traditional media. The reporters' view grows up out of the rituals and routines of everyday journalism. New media experts are more intimately familiar with new technology and its practical potentialities and are therefore capable of assessing the change of journalism in that light. The analysis of new content features in online publications is the researcher's construction which presents new dimensions of journalism that already are reality today. As can be seen, the path is rather straightforward: from the practices and practitioners of traditional media via connoisseurs of the novel medium to state-of-the-art experiments with the new medium.

The cases are of course mostly applicable to the Finnish media and journalism environment but, *mutatis mutandis*, the observations are also valid to other Western countries where the status and tradition of journalism is simi-

lar and which have an inclination towards enforcing the Information Society agenda.<sup>1</sup>

## 4.1 Editors

### 4.1.1 Strategic experts

The perspective of newspaper editors provides a feasible starting point for this excursion into the Internet's effects on journalism. As described at the beginning of this study, newspapers as a journalistic institution are a useful prism through which to observe the emblem of the newest communication technology, the Internet. At the same time, as indicated earlier when discussing the Internet as a publishing medium, newspapers have encountered this new application in the midst of turmoil. Within newspapers, editors are uniquely placed to serve as objects in a study aimed at assessing the effects of the Internet: at the top of the newsroom hierarchy and at once representatives of publishers and owners, editors are (at least in theory) in touch with everyday journalistic work and aware of their papers' ambitions as business ventures. Therefore their views reflect both journalistic aspirations and economic realities. In fact, editors are a symbol of the newspaper's dual function as a servant of public communication and a profit-driven enterprise. Indeed it is no exaggeration, in view of the purpose of this study, to call editors strategic experts.

The view presented here is a summary of a representative survey among Finnish newspaper editors.<sup>2</sup> The field covered in the survey and in the com-

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<sup>1</sup> Finland (pop. 5 million) is an appropriate environment for field studies on this topic because it is one of the leading countries in the world in terms of adopting Internet communication technology. At the beginning of 1999 there were 107 Internet hosts per 1000 inhabitants in Finland. This is more than anywhere else in the world with the exception of some Pacific islands. According to data collected in the latter half of 1998, 54% of Finns aged between 15 and 74 years use computers and 1.2 million Finns visit the Internet at least once a week. (Internettiin liitettyjen...; Internetin kotikäyttö...; Luoma-Marttila 1999; Rinne 1999)

This is also reflected in the newspaper industry's new media efforts. In January 1999, 40 of 56 daily newspapers had an online version and altogether there were 55 newspapers' online publications. In addition, several broadcasting companies and magazines have noteworthy online publications. (Lähes 40...1999, 5) A comprehensive list of journalistic online publications in Finland is given at <<http://www.wysiwyg.fi/jv/>>.

<sup>2</sup>The original research report "Newspapers and the Internet - hopes, concerns, uncertainties" (Heinonen 1997b, in Finnish) was published in 1997. The basic data set was collected in April and May the same year using questionnaires, with additional focused interviews conducted in June with typical respondents. The study comprised all Finnish dailies and a random sample of newspapers that appear less frequently. A total of 72 editors were involved in the survey, which had a response rate of 100%

plementing focused interviews ranged from the future of newspapers as a journalistic institution through online publishing to the journalistic skills required by the Internet. The first interesting discovery is that on the whole, editors remain loyal to their media, they hold that newspapers are not threatened by the Internet, and even say that the probable effects of the Internet have been overestimated. One editor said that the effects of the Internet on newspapers “have surely been exaggerated in the short term as it has been said that it [the Internet] will kill off all newspapers”. Of the editors, 83% think that the newspaper is a better medium for journalism than online publications, and over half (56%) assume that not even the audience is interested in newspapers which should be read on-screen. One can ask whether it is at all conceivable that editors should the opposite view, declaring the end of newspapers and praising the Internet, since it is rather natural that exactly editors, if anyone, have faith in their product. This attitude is in itself quite important with respect to the possible effects of the Internet in the practice of journalism, because editors have a decisive word to say in such issues as how to promote Internet skills among reporters and how interaction with the audience via the Internet is organised and encouraged or discouraged. Considering this, the view of editors is rather crucial with regard to the topic of this study.

#### 4.1.2 “You have to adapt...”

Despite (or perhaps because of) their faith in the traditional newspaper as a journalistic product, newspaper editors have a dichotomous view on the future of journalism during the age of the Internet. On the one hand, it seems they are convinced that newspapers will be able to retain their traditional position even in the changing environment. They believe that newspapers can benefit from the Internet in their own ongoing development efforts. On the other hand, it is also considered possible (although not very likely) that the potential new communication means will become a reality in such a way that the whole foundation of newspapers in terms of information dissemination and economic viability will be overturned.

The basic attitude is one of uncertainty: the editors are clearly not sure how things are going to turn out, and consequently they are quite careful in their comments. This is not the first time newspapers have seen new applications of communications technology emerge, but very few have stood the test of time (see Riley and Keough 1998). The Internet is still so novel an

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thanks to a combination of postal and telephone methods. Of these 72 editors eight were selected for complementing interviews. The participating newspapers represented three-quarters of the total circulation of Finnish newspapers (1995 statistics).

innovation that editors are reluctant to say whether or not they expect it to survive. One editor reminded that “We in Finland always seem to be the forerunners [in new communications technology], we are always there banging our head against the wall and carrying out expensive experiments”. In the case of the Internet, it would be better “to observe and get prepared, so that we are ready if it really gets going”.

Editors tend to look upon the Internet as an opportunity rather than a threat to the future of the newspaper industry. Only some 20% of the editors believe that newspapers will be seriously threatened by the audience’s increasing use of information networks, and no more than 12% expect that advertisers will desert newspapers in favour of online publications. On the other hand, there is a feeling that newspapers should experiment with the new technology and put the new opportunities to the test. Newspapers must get to know the new medium - among other reasons because it is thought that it appeals to young people (93% of the editors think that it is possible to reach the young audience via the Internet), but also because the Internet is considered a useful tool for developing newspaper journalism: 91% of the editors see that the Internet offers new journalistic possibilities for newspapers.

Indeed newspapers have been moving rather quickly to see what they can do on the Internet and how they can benefit. Today most major papers in Finland and even many smaller ones have some kind of electronic publication on the Internet. Most of them, however, are more or less straightforward copies of the main product, showing very little ambition and innovative effort. Clearly, these “shovelware papers” have been set up for the sole purpose of trying out how the new medium works technically, although there are some exceptions which have shown more imagination and creativity to see how journalism could be developed with the new medium. It is noteworthy that at least so far the most significant experimental projects in Finland have been launched by newspapers and other traditional media. There has been hardly any serious challenge from outside the media field.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that this statement is as valid in the first half of 1999 as it was in 1997. However, it should be noted that among the traditional media, newspapers have encountered considerable online competition from broadcasting companies in Finland. The public broadcasting corporation YLE and the commercial station MTV3 have both set up web-sites with a wide range of contents. At the same time there is also increasing competition from outside the traditional media. In autumn 1998 the Swedish telecommunications operator Telia launched a new web-site in Finland which includes news produced on a subcontracting basis. This should be noted because in Sweden, Telia has joined forces with CNN to set up Svenska CNN, a web-site offering news and current affairs journalism. The Finnish telecom company Sonera has also expanded its online services. Newspapers, on the other hand, have been rather conservative in developing their online publications. In the first Finnish online newspapers contest in spring 1999, the jury (of which I was a member) commented that newspapers are too cautious in using the possibilities of the new medium in their online efforts (Verkkolehdet... 1999).

As we can see, newspaper editors in Finland are neither very excited nor particularly concerned about the Internet and its impacts on newspapers as a social institution or as a business. At this institutional level the new technology does not seem to be regarded as a major revolution, at least for the time being. As one editor concluded, “[The Internet] is not a matter of life and death. I think that in Finnish circumstances it is still possible to adopt a policy of wait and see. After all, we do have a strong press”.

Not surprisingly, editors are also quite cautious in their assessments of the impacts of the new technology on the day-to-day work of journalists - indeed if the institutional framework of the job remains more or less the same, then there can hardly be any dramatic changes in newsroom routines. For instance, there is some reservation about using the Internet as a source of information in journalism. The Internet was seen as an important tool in journalistic information gathering by 60% of the editors, but more than one in three (34%) thought that it is not a necessary medium in this respect. So although it is widely agreed that this is an important new medium, there are some doubts about its utility. The main concerns have to do with the reliability of information obtained via the Internet and with practical difficulties in using it. “[On the Internet] reliable and unreliable sources have the same standing, and it is not necessarily easy to distinguish between them”, one of the editors said. On the other hand, the editors’ survey revealed that in most newspapers journalists’ access to the Internet is restricted. All journalists had access to the Internet from their own terminal only in about every third of the newsrooms represented in the study. Either access is from certain dedicated terminals only or access is possible only for certain journalists or to certain URL-addresses.

In spite of all these doubts and reservations, the view of newspaper editors is that journalistic practices will be changing to some extent with new communications technology. They agree that skills in both online publishing and gathering information from the Internet are becoming an important part of the journalist’s basic qualifications. Almost 90% of the editors expect that journalists will have to master more varied skills in the future. Consequently, editors think that Internet skills should be fully incorporated into the journalism curricula. “Obviously journalism training will also have to teach how to search and retrieve information from the Net”, said one editor. However, the editors do not believe that these new skills will take over from the professional journalist’s traditional skills and knowledge, but complement them: “We are not looking for computer nerds, but reporters who can master the basic journalistic skills”, commented one of the editors.



### 4.1.3 Assessing the view of editors

The main determinant of editors' attitudes towards new communications technology, it seems, is economic viability. This is most clearly reflected in the dichotomy of their attitude profiles towards the Internet: on the one hand there are those who feel it is important to get prepared, on the other hand there are those who take an attitude of wait-and-see. The former are quite clear in their view that new communications technology might be significant for newspapers, that the potential impacts of the online medium are generally positive and that the Internet will change the image of the journalist's profession. This group feels it is necessary to get prepared for the new situation by experimenting with online publications, for instance. The latter, wait-and-see group are less certain in their views, and they have no experience and/or no opinions of online publishing. Further, this group attaches less importance to the new professional skills of the journalist.

Among Finnish editors the clear majority is formed by those who say it is important to get prepared. The wait-and-see editors tend to cluster in smaller independent newspapers that are less competitive. These newspapers do not have the same sort of resources to experiment with the Internet as bigger papers, or smaller papers owned by major media groups. Indeed attitudes towards the Internet seem to be primarily determined by economic realities rather than the desire to develop journalistic expression. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that attitudes are often justified by reference to the bottom line: as long as no profits can be expected, it is felt that any experiment should remain a cautious intervention based primarily on technological interests.

It is important to bear in mind that this perspective on the Internet and its impacts on newspapers is constructed from within traditional journalism. It is quite natural that newspaper editors are bound to examine the new communications technology from the vantage-point of current journalistic conventions. For example, any new working methods will be weighed against existing routines and old familiar ways of organising the work process. Similarly, new publishing opportunities will most probably be examined in terms of how they serve and support existing methods of expression and the tried and tested journalistic formats. On the other hand, this basic attitude may be erroneous if the Internet and its underlying communication technology appear to be radically different by nature to those technological innovations that the editors have encountered before.

## 4.2 Reporters

### 4.2.1 Informed opinion

Since this research project is basically about the changing nature of the journalist's profession, I will now shift my attention to reporters. In accordance with the scope of the study, those airing their views are newspaper journalists.

This chapter is based on a series of focused interviews with 20 Finnish newspaper reporters.<sup>4</sup> Again, out of these 20 individual accounts I have constructed a unified comment of a newspaper reporter in order to bring yet another expert opinion into the discussion about the Internet and journalistic work. In this case, the interviewees are experts of the topic in two senses. Firstly, the interviewees are experts in their own work, i.e. reporting, since all but one of them have worked in journalism for at least ten years. Secondly, the population from which the interviewees were drawn had been trained to use the Internet in their work in special further training courses. This means the interviewees had familiarised themselves with the research topic - at least during these courses. This, in turn, implies that I am not offering here a representative survey of how Finnish journalists use the Internet, but rather an informed opinion of the effects and advantages or disadvantages of the Internet in newspaper journalist's everyday work.<sup>5</sup>

The starting point for this series of interviews was that - as indicated in the previous chapters - the Internet may in principle affect the reporter's work. It is possible to distinguish four dimensions regarding the everyday journalistic work process: Firstly, the Internet may contribute to improved information gathering by giving new or better access to electronic databases, for

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<sup>4</sup> The interviews were carried out in October and November 1998. A total of 20 reporters from 11 daily newspapers (17 persons) and weekly newsmagazines (3 persons) contributed to the research. These persons were selected with a view to getting different types of papers into the sample. The population consisted of 64 journalists in the papers which had been participants in a special programme of further training of journalists in computer-assisted journalism. The two-level courses (basics: 3+3 days, advanced: 3+4 days) called Computer-assisted information gathering were organised by the Tampere Journalism Research and Development Centre. The essential content of the courses was the Internet. The research has been reported in "It's like you have to know it'. The Internet in the newspaper reporter's work" (Heinonen 1999, in Finnish).

<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, it is reasonably justified to assume that the views presented here may actually be quite typical among Finnish journalists. Based on everyday observations and contacts with the media and journalists, one can say that some of the journalists ignore the Internet, some of them are almost "nerds", but most common is the attitude represented by those interviewed for this study: the Internet appears to them as an interesting phenomenon and they are willing to learn how to use it.

instance. Secondly, this improved information gathering may change the balance of power between journalists and sources in favour of former by way of giving journalists access to alternative sources (see Koch 1991). Thirdly, the Internet removes time and geographical limits, allowing for instance (relatively) easy global information gathering. Fourth and finally, the communicative features of the Internet - especially interactivity - offer new opportunities for interaction between journalists and the audience. (Heinonen 1998b, 10-12) As we can see, the Internet's potential effects upon the reporter's work range from practical skills to journalist's professional role.

#### 4.2.2 Useful but not indispensable

Summarising these interviews, it seems that for the newspaper reporter the Internet at this stage is a useful tool in journalistic work but not a necessity - it is quite possible to complete one's assignments without touching the Internet. This general observation can be analysed in more detail from two angles.

From the point of view of professional practice, the usefulness of the Internet is related to its feature as a device for gathering information. Reporters do consider the Internet as an asset in this respect: "Surely it's useful, it's one more way to gather information", said one of the interviewed reporters. In particular, reporters covering rather specialised beats seem to find the Internet useful, perhaps because their information gathering is in a way naturally targeted in certain directions, thus making it easier to filter relevant information from the maze of the cyberspace. However, the Internet is mostly used for checking individual details of information rather than conducting more challenging or wide search operations. As an information gathering tool, the Internet is considered to be fast, giving access to a wide range of different sources.

The reliability of the information obtained from the Internet does not generally seem to be a problem, since it was underlined that it is the responsibility of journalists to check all information regardless of its origin, but it was possible to sense a certain cautiousness with regard to the trustworthiness of the Internet as a whole. As one of the reporters saw this: "Well, the Internet is the Internet. Of course it's not perfect: the information is not always reliable - but on the other hand, what information ever is? Being able to put the information in its context is down to the journalist's professionalism." The problem of reliability is often treated so that reporters mainly use familiar sources that are now available on the Net as well.

In the reporters' experiences, electronic mail and the World Wide Web are the most useful features of the Internet, while features like chat, newsgroups or mailing lists are used rarely or hardly ever. Electronic mail is used practically by all (in some cases this is not Internet e-mail but for instance an

application within a local area network of the newsrooms), and not only for communication but also for sending and/or receiving material (e.g. sending articles to be checked and receiving texts and even pictures from correspondents). The Web is a feature of the Internet which in many cases is considered to be the “proper” Internet, so much so that in some interviews the reporters did not think they used the Internet if they only used e-mail and not the Web. The Web is used in a variety of different ways: to follow traditional sources such as public authorities and enterprises using their web-sites, to conduct targeted searches using search-engines, to use the Web as directory or dictionary to check facts and even grammar, and to observe other media online with the intention either to search information or to keep an eye on breaking news and their coverage.

Major problems in the use of the Internet in the reporter’s everyday work seem to derive from pressures of work and inaccessibility to the Net. Although the Internet is considered to be relatively fast, its use nevertheless often appears to be too slow for the hectic needs of the daily newspaper routine. “I simply don’t have the time to go and search the Internet...I often think that it’s faster to make a phone call”, one reporter commented. This judgement may partly be due to lack of skills. It is also a reflection of increasing congestion on the Internet, although in some cases the reason for the slow connection may lie in an inadequate capacity at the newsroom’s end.

In many newsrooms the problem of access is accentuated by limited accessibility to the Internet: instead of being able to browse the Web at their own desk, reporters have to queue up for the few dedicated computers which in the worst cases are doubling as somebody’s workstations. One of the interviewees explained that “of course you’d use it [the Internet] more often if it were running on your own computer because it would be available all the time”.

The reporters’ view also reveals that from the point of view of the journalist’s professional role the Internet does not signify a great change, at least in the case of journalists working in traditional media. If we consider the relationship between journalists and sources, it seems that the Internet is just another way of reaching traditional sources. As indicated earlier, one reason for this is that from the maze of the Internet it is at the same time convenient and safe to pick up those sources that are known to be reliable. This kind of “information conservatism” has also been noted in British studies (see Nicholas and Williams 1998), and it is enforced by the practice of using the Internet largely for checking pieces of information rather than for major information gathering projects. As a consequence, it seems that in real life the Internet hardly brings about the kind of changes in the balance of power of journalists and sources as has been predicted or hoped.

The interviews indicate that one reason for the continuity of source traditions is the nature of the typical newspaper reporter's tasks. The routine consists of piling up separate news items for which the basic material is received at least half-way ready-made in press releases or at press conferences. The journalist's information gathering task is limited to checking occasional facts. And, as was mentioned repeatedly in the interviews, there is also the constant pressure of the deadline which does not encourage for possibly ambitious but surely uncertain adventures on the Internet at the expense of productive labour.

The relationship between the audience and newspaper journalists does not seem to be affected by the Internet. As one reporter said: "I don't think that e-mail or the Internet or whatever [device] brings journalism closer to people - I mean, if people have something to say, they will surely contact you." One point in here is that reporters do not generally consider genuine interactivity as an essential feature of their relationship with the audience. Admittedly, the feedback from the audience is thought to be important, even necessary for journalists, but even here one can sense some hesitation with regard to the effects of the Internet: it is feared that getting feedback via an information network instead of live contacts will further alienate journalists and the audience from each other, and it is suspected that the feedback via the Internet is biased towards better-off younger male readers. "Thinking of elderly people in the countryside - you won't get much feedback from them via the Internet", said one reporter. And feedback as such is still rather weak interaction. If it is not followed by a reaction from the newsroom, it is just another one-way line from the audience, simply replacing a hard copy letter with a digital one.

The idea of actual conversation with the audience using the communicative features of the Internet is clearly not very popular among newspaper journalists. Here we come again to the newsroom's everyday routines that do not include and do not allow time for conversing digitally - or otherwise - with the audience. It is not uncommon for e-mails from the audience to be spiked for (possible) later treatment. "Well, there are limits to how much interaction there can be considering that we still have to publish the paper", one reporter said. It seems that visions of interactive journalism produced by journalists with the audience as collaborators and with the Internet as an essential interactive tool, are very much premature. Again it should be emphasised that this concerns the traditional newspaper. It was a common attitude among the interviewees that in an online newspaper, all the features of the Internet, including interactivity, should be used to create a different type of journalism.

### 4.2.3 Assessing the view of newspaper reporters

The overall picture of the Internet in the newspaper reporter's work presents the new tool as something that is being adjusted in the settled pattern of professional conventions instead of a device that is changing them. This view resembles that of newspaper editors, thus implying that from the point of view of the traditional media (or at least newspapers), the Internet is thought to have fairly limited significance. The traditional routines are continued, although some practices may change to a certain extent. Similar results were also reported in a study of American newspaper editors and reporters (Singer 1997). In that study, journalists said they expected that in "an online world", the basic journalistic skills and competencies would remain largely the same, even though the nature of work would probably change to some extent. Compared to the promises attached to Internet communication, this is a somewhat conservative view. One self-evident explanation is that in the case of newspaper reporters (as well as editors), we have been approaching the Internet in the context of a traditional journalistic medium and its practices instead of online media. It is possible that the publishing platform is a major factor when considering the importance of the Internet in journalism.

On the other hand, it is possible to problematise this explanation by questioning the justification of traditional work conventions in newspapers. It should be noted that in the reporters' interviews the pressures and the hectic nature of the routine work was used as an excuse for not utilising the Internet to find alternative sources or to interact with the audience. The interviewees complained for instance that because of their workload, they did not have enough time to learn the Internet skills they would need, not to speak of maintaining them by practising during the day. In some cases "surfing" the Net was clearly considered something that is not part of the reporter's job in contrast to, say, reading other newspapers. In addition, the normal routines can be performed satisfactorily by relying on accustomed sources and rather superficial information. Finally, it was revealed that although the feedback from the audience in itself is said to be important, genuine interaction which includes personal conversations via e-mail, for instance, is nonetheless a burden for journalists.

Stretching the point somewhat, it can be said that the conventional reporter's job in newspapers is, or is felt to be so laden with obligatory tasks that there simply is no time to learn new skills in information gathering, or to reform one's source system, or to interact with the audience. Although the Internet might well be a device for changing the situation, at least potentially, the prevailing conventions tend to shrink its effect to such an extent that it actually may strengthen traditional practices and roles in the newspaper reporter's work instead of changing them.

## 4.3. New media experts

### 4.3.1 A view from outside conventional journalism

As we saw above, newspaper editors and reporters took a view on the future of journalism and the journalistic profession that was firmly anchored to the perspective of traditional media. I now move on to look at a view which opens up another perspective: this view is constructed on the basis of focused interviews with new media experts.<sup>6</sup> This brings into the debate a view from outside traditional media practices and conventions.

The view is constructed out of interviews with 20 persons, which means that it cannot be reduced to the opinions of any single individual interviewee. The group of respondents can be understood as a social object whose collective view has been condensed into a coherent and consistent synthesis. As such it obviously leaves aside many points that individual interviewees might have wanted to get across, but for the present purposes it is a useful way of bringing a new voice into the debate.

The question of how journalism and the journalistic profession were expected to change was approached via the theme of publishing on the Internet (in practice the World Wide Web). This concrete new communications technology served as an anchorage point for discussions on the new features of journalism, changing professional practices, new training needs, the relationship between journalists and the audience and the role of the journalistic profession in modern society.

### 4.3.2 Changing times

The view of new media and journalism experts opens up a slightly different perspective on the current situation and on the future of journalism and the journalistic profession than the views of the representatives of traditional media. According to new media experts, we are living in a period of ongoing changes which affect at least the day-to-day practices of journalism's institutions, the professional identity of journalists (particularly as far as their rela-

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<sup>6</sup>This study has been reported in "Audience calling, journalism do you read? Visions on online journalism and journalists" (Heinonen 1998d, in Finnish). The material comprised 19 interviews with a total of 20 persons (one of the interviews was with two persons). The interviews were done between September and December 1997. All interviewees have first-hand experience of new media, mainly the online medium, and many of traditional media too. They were recruited on the expectation that they would have meaningful insights to offer on the future development of journalism. The majority (16) of the interviewees were Finnish, two were Swedish and two American.

tionship to the audience is concerned) and to some extent the role of journalism (and journalists) in society.

New media experts have a very similar view to newspaper editors on the future prospects of journalism at an institutional level: The arrival of new communications technology will mean more and stiffer competition, but the traditional media (including newspapers) will retain their position. However, the traditional media will have to change with the times and give strategic priority to the production of contents rather than rely exclusively on certain publication media such as paper. As one of the interviewees commented: "I think that newspapers should see their role as content producers: is there any sense or need to own a printing press? Defining their role as a content producer leads to the question as to how this task could and should be realised." If newspapers fail to change and stubbornly stick to the old, the innovative challenge mounted by teleoperators, software houses, etc. may begin to undermine the position of traditional media.

This vision on journalism and the journalistic profession is, at first glance, rather difficult to interpret. On the one hand, new media experts expect to see no changes in the foundations of journalism; on the other hand, they say it might be necessary to review and update the concept of journalism. The contradiction is explained by the fact that the constant element in journalism is thought to be represented by its ideal image, by abstract notions of "journalism" and "journalist" that do not necessarily have anything to do with the reality of journalistic practice. Journalistic practice, by contrast, may change quite considerably with the arrival of new communications technology: modes of presentation may become more diversified, interactional features draw journalists and the audience closer, an element of community evolves in journalism. According to one of the experts "there is emerging a kind of audience which require of their media a certain dialogue with the readers/consumers". This expert added that in the printed newspaper, the dialogue is inevitably muffled: "The Net is the best medium available for creating that kind of dialogue and community feeling, ". Following these changes, journalism would no longer be a one-way road where current affairs contents are transmitted from the editorial room to a passive audience, but a process of interaction, exchange and dialogue aimed at joint production of a content with a much wider time-span than is currently the case.

Given the changes they expect to see in journalistic practices, it is logical that new media experts also anticipate significant changes in the journalist's professional role. Although the basic ideals may remain the same - the journalist must be able to recognise a news story, know how to write, etc. - the new medium also requires a host of new skills. Some of the new skills deal with mastering the technology, as one of the experts said: "No matter how easy they will make these [computer] systems to use, they will always involve many technical dimensions". Technical skills are not, however, thought



to be the most crucial of the journalists' competencies in the Age of the Net. What is required of the future journalist is not so much new manual skills as a new attitude to the job. This has two dimensions: Firstly, in the future journalists will be required to process contents that can be used by several different media at the same time. In other words, the requirement is that journalists must be multi-skilled at least to an extent that they understand basic requirements of a copy in different media. Referring to the Internet, one of the experts described this by saying that "the online journalist must have some idea of what can be done with this medium, what it allows and what is not possible".

Secondly, journalists should be able to take advantage of the possibility of two-way communication offered by information networks. This may be one of the most crucial factors underlying the changes that are expected in the forms of journalism and in the journalist's qualification requirements. "In online publishing", one of the experts said, "the reaction from the readers comes much more easily. There must be a stronger capability to receive these reactions and to justify the stories". This online accountability to readers is something quite novel, since one would be hard put to describe traditional journalism as genuine dialogue between journalists and the audience, never mind joint production of journalistic contents. This aspect of the new media is heavily underlined in the view of new media experts. It follows that the journalist's new skills requirements also include a social dimension: the new medium means that there is more immediate, more frequent and also more edgy contact between the journalist and the audience than is the case in traditional media. Ultimately this kind of interaction may even require of journalists an ability to work together with the recipients of their work and really treat them as collaborators rather than as an "audience" or "sources". The problem, as one of the experts said, is that "journalists are not exactly known for their great social skills".

This brings us to the question of the constancy of the concept of journalism. If we have the audience responding to professional journalistic contents on the Net and attaching their comments to those contents as equally respected and presented parts, does this combination qualify as journalism any more? What about the situation where members of the audience exchange views or information on the digital pages of a journalistic online publication, with the journalist withdrawing into a role of moderator? Or will professional journalists in the future be expected - according to a new good journalistic practice - to exchange views with the public via e-mail on a story they have written? These aspects raised in the interviews indicate a change in journalism.

### 4.3.3 Assessing the view of new media experts

The view of new media experts seems quite unequivocal that the journalist's professional role is changing, and changing in a direction that does not necessarily fit in with the traditional journalist's identity. With the new interactive media, journalists will be deprived of their traditional gatekeeper role in a process of one-way communication and be transformed into agents in a complex process of interactive communication.

On the other hand it would seem that the current role of journalists in society will remain justifiable. The view of new media experts stresses that the audience needs more help than ever to cope with the growing information flow: given their limited time resources, the audience will need professionals to pick out for them such elements as they want to have for further processing. This, of course, is the traditional job of the journalist in society. However, there are no guarantees that the traditional journalist will be needed to do this task in the future. Starting a publication is not only a theoretical option on the Internet, as it has been in the traditional media environment. With relatively moderate costs, just about anyone can nowadays start an online publication and bring news (or materials that pass for news, "look-a-like-news") to the audience. Indeed journalists may see their place in society taken over by public relations officers, advertisers or even by computer specialists, designing individually tailored programs that will monitor information flows and pick out those parts that subscribers want to get. Increasingly, journalists' choice of what is considered newsworthy (i.e. journalism) is just one of the many recommended agendas offered for the audience.

On the whole, the view of new media experts on the future prospects of journalism and the journalistic profession is more dynamic than that of newspaper editors and reporters. There is an inclination towards, perhaps even a measure of enthusiasm about change. At the same time the concept of journalism appears to take on at least new dimensions, if not a new content altogether. It is recognised that journalism and the journalistic profession have a special importance and meaning in principle, but at the same time there is an implicit criticism within this view which says that in the changing environment, the traditional determinants of journalism are quite simply not adequate.

## 4.4 New media practice

### 4.4.1 A two-way relationship

The fourth view grows up out of new media practices. This is a researcher's analytical view which is abstracted from the actual contents of online publications on the Internet, from the message that is conveyed by those contents. The view is constructed on the basis of research in which I analysed the distinctive features of the content of online publications and from this vantage-point drew a picture of the potential implications of the new technology environment to journalism and journalistic practices.<sup>7</sup> This view operates simultaneously on two different levels. Firstly, it offers a description of the present-day situation in that the material was collected from existing products in the real world rather than from the wishful views of visionaries. Secondly, it also looks ahead to the future in the sense that none of these publications (neither at the time of data collection nor at the time of writing) contained all the various content features that the new technology seems to allow for.

The baseline assumption is that the whole exercise of publishing via information networks, and more specifically the Internet and the World Wide Web, is worthwhile and meaningful. This is not as obvious and self-evident a premise as we are ordinarily given to understand in the technology debate on journalism. As indicated earlier, the Internet was initially intended as communication rather than publishing media (in the sense that publishing is traditionally understood in journalism). The first uses of information networks were to transmit simple textual messages, short notes or huge files, from the computer of one individual or group to another's. Traditional journalistic publishing, by contrast, is based on assumptions of a large readership, on one-way communication, on visual elements and most importantly on getting as many people as possible interested. Thus, initially the features of information networks did not fully coincide with the basic needs of journalistic publishing.

Having said that, one can note that the Internet has been adapted to better meet the needs of diversified contents, such as journalism (the development of web-browsers and related software is one example). At the same time,

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<sup>7</sup>The study has been reported in "Pushing and tailoring. Analysing the content features of online publications from the perspective of journalism" (Heinonen 1998c, in Finnish) The material was collected in autumn 1997. After preliminary observation, the basic data set was compiled from 47 online publications whose contents were analysed using a classification scheme. The sample included not only journalistic but also other online publications: the purpose was to cover as broad a range of new media contents as possible.

journalism itself has adapted to the requirements of the new medium. For example, because of technical shortcomings such as low bandwidths and small and/or low-resolution screens, online publications tend to favour shorter texts, small pictures, etc. so as to make reception on the computer screen at least slightly less cumbersome. This implies, firstly, that publishing on the Internet requires adjustment on the part of journalism. This is of course the case with any medium, but indicates that online journalism is or should be something else than, say, print journalism. Secondly, the relationship between the technologically new medium and journalism is a reciprocal one: the medium shapes the contents, but at the same time the contents compels the medium to adapt in line with the requirements of the contents.

#### 4.4.2 Distinctive characteristics of online publications

I have condensed my analysis of the contents of Internet publications into three dimensions. Firstly, there are certain characteristics in the new technology publishing environment that have to do with the reorganisation of the relationship between journalism and/or journalists and the audience. Secondly, there are certain noteworthy aspects in online publications that have to do with the contents of those publications. And thirdly, there are certain characteristics that pertain to the level of the journalism institution or media. These dimensions are so versatile that in the following I will take just one brief but illustrative example from each category under closer examination.

As far as the audience relationship is concerned, one of the new features of publishing found in online publications is horizontal communication. In this publishing connection what I mean by this is that within the communication space created by an online publication, any member of the audience can communicate directly with another member or other members of the audience. It is also possible for the audience to communicate with sources. The role of the publication and the journalist in horizontal communication is to provide the space for communication by others, but otherwise to remain in the role of a passive bystander.

In practice online publications have made use of this feature in the form of open noticeboards, more or less real-time chatrooms, publications based entirely or in part on collective writing and solutions in which the editorial content is only the first, opening contribution. A Finnish online publication called Duuni.net <<http://www.duuni.net/>> is a good example of an effort along these lines. It is a publication with no printed version, though the publisher is a renown publishing house. The concept of Duuni.net is based on membership in the Duuni community. To become a member, you have to register by providing personal information on the site. This will give you access to numerous discussion groups, and you may get to know the other members by,

for instance, studying their individual digital “visiting cards”. The core concept of this publication is that most of the contents are produced by the members in open (though moderated) discussion groups which often carry newsworthy current information. Nevertheless, Duuni.net also offers news services targeted to its audience which consists predominantly of marketing and other business people.

Technically speaking horizontal communication is “simply” a matter of online publications putting to use the interactivity of information networks. As far as journalistic principles go, the implications are more far-reaching: after all, both the journalistic institution and the professional journalist are here withdrawing very much into the background. It is not only that there is no need for traditional editing in horizontal communication, but the journalist’s traditional professional skills are quite simply not adequate for such tasks as getting an online conversation going. In the case of Duuni.net, for instance, the moderators of the discussion groups are not journalists but members of the community.

A significant new feature with regard to the contents that can be found in online publications is the expansion of space and time. As far as physical space is concerned there are in principle no other limitations to the length of an online publication or any specific part of that publication except those presented by the capacity of the server. Indeed publications on the Internet have the potential to carry quite massive stories, something that newspapers could only try to do through exhausting serialisation. (It is another matter altogether how much point there is in publishing such stories on the Internet as long as line speeds and interfaces are as slow and cumbersome as they are today.) One example of an extensive use of the features of Internet communication is a story called “Blackhawk Down” <<http://www.phillynews.com/packages/somalia/nov16/default.asp>> published in 1997 in the Philadelphia Online. The story consists of 30 parts which contain traditional textual reporting, story-telling in an almost literary style, audio and video clips, animations and photographs. The story is almost too big and too difficult to consume, but it nevertheless gives an idea of what can be done with an online newspaper compared to a printed one.

The widening of the time horizon with online media may have two dimensions, depending on the angle we take. The Internet allows for contents to be updated almost on a real-time basis, which for newspapers that are accustomed to the 24-hour daily rhythm may at once be an exciting and a traumatic experience. On the other hand, this publishing medium has a virtually limitless storing capacity, which means that earlier contents are always accessible to the audience. Indeed, many online newspapers have a facility which allows readers to conduct searches in their archives and in this way to contextualise daily pieces of news with earlier material. Journalistic institutions and journalists do not necessarily feel very comfortable with this: while

previously a story would be “history” by the time the next one was published, now its life-span and in a sense the journalist’s responsibility for its contents lasts much longer. The traditional journalistic mentality of “writing once, forgetting immediately” will thus be challenged.

This is again “simply” a matter of putting certain features of Internet technology to effective use in publishing. Nonetheless it does raise important questions about the principles of journalism, or at the very least calls for a new orientation to the journalistic work process. For instance, as can be seen in some publications, it is technically quite easy to compile process news on the Internet: the news may consist of real-time flashes, background stories may be linked to them from archives, comments and new background stories may be added as the event unfolds and the whole issue can be contextualised by means of hypertext throughout the Internet information space. However, the process as a whole requires an approach as well as professional competencies that are essentially different from those needed in conventional news and current affairs journalism.

One of the features on the level of media or journalism institutions is that online publishing may further blur the boundaries of journalism. It can be observed in online publications that on the Internet, it may be even more difficult than it is in traditional media to distinguish between journalistic and non-journalistic contents. The Finnish online publication FriscoNet <<http://www.frisconet.fi/>> is specifically aimed at young people with contents reflecting this: its pages feature music columns, articles about television shows, quizzes, sports, etc. Although the contents resemble journalism, the site is sponsored by a soft-drink company. The actual content producer is a separate publisher (not a traditional media house), which calls the site “a commercial web-publication”. In this case the sponsoring is detectable by the ever-present images of the sponsor’s products. On the Internet there are countless other sponsored publications that are produced in the format of journalistic publications, links are provided for easy access from journalistic contents to commercial contents, and in some journalistic publications part of the contents is produced outside the editorial room.

However, the Internet can obviously not take all the blame (or perhaps in some cases the credit) for this confusion; after all textual advertising is a familiar phenomenon in newspapers as well. Indeed it may well be that these kinds of features will eventually cease to be a problem as both the people producing the publications and their audiences learn how different elements in the new medium should be marked and detected.

#### 4.4.3 Assessing the view of new media practice

Looking at the contents of online publications, it seems quite clear that the range of journalistic methods, processes and forms of expression are set to expand with the Internet. Online publishing may also change the journalist's relationship to the audience, at the same time as the very essence of journalism may be blurred. Indeed the view constructed out of new media practices portrays the Internet as a more potent and dynamic source of change in journalism than the view of new media experts, and certainly than the view of newspaper editors and reporters. This indicates that the communicative features of the Internet have more to offer to journalism than practitioners are willing to or capable of putting to effective use.

However, it is important to bear in mind that the explicit purpose of the study reviewed above was to identify new features found in the contents of online publications. These features were searched for from a fairly extensive sample, which in turn was formed on the basis of preliminary observations of an even more extensive variety of online publications. The reality of producing individual online publications is certainly a much more mundane business than one might be inclined to think on the basis of this presentation. The majority of online publications still have very few distinctive features; this applies most particularly to the publications of traditional media houses. This is not only a matter of attitudes but also of resources dedicated to experiments in online journalism in any given publication. In everyday reality, journalism and its professional practices have not changed very much after all, even online.

It is noteworthy that many of the points raised above are not as such tied up with any particular technology. For example, there has been much debate on the question of journalism's relationship to its audience in the context of newspapers as well, and the writing of background process news is not necessarily dependent on the amount of time or space available. Indeed it seems that the debate on the possibilities opened by the Internet is raising questions that do not have to do only with a particular technology, but that go deeper into the essence of journalism and the journalistic profession.

## 5. Conclusions

*“Journalism...is rather in disarray these days, beset by a bafflement of purposes, a damaged self-understanding, and a confusion of mission and possibilities.” (Carey 1997, 330)*

Carey’s conclusion is an appropriate way to open the final chapter of this study on journalism and the journalistic profession in the Age of the Net. Although the Internet is just one of the reasons for the present confusion in journalism, it does seem to be a point of culmination for many trends affecting journalism. As an icon of the Information Society, the Internet highlights the issues that journalism encounters when new communications technology is introduced in society. Carey describes the relationship of journalism and the Information Society in rather strong terms: “...the ‘information society’ has destroyed or radically transformed the organizational base of journalism and created a new system for the industrial production of culture” (ibid., 329). This is quite a sharp and all-embracing assessment of what is supposedly happening to journalism in our time, and I have read it as an invitation to scrutinise the situation in closer detail. In this study I have tried to answer that invitation by exploring journalism and the journalistic profession in the Information Society, which I have done by studying the effects of the Internet from different perspectives of journalism. In this chapter I will try to sum up my work by reviewing the findings of the study and reflecting upon them in the light of the premises of the study. I will begin with an assessment of the four empirical research projects, proceed from there “backwards” to re-visit the reasonings for the change of journalism and conclude with a look ahead.

### 5.1 Two inclinations

Drawing essentially on my four empirical studies but spicing up their findings with substances from the literature, it is possible to identify two basic inclinations within journalism with regard to the effects of the Internet. The first one can be called the revolutionary inclination and the second one the evolutionary inclination. These abstract typifications are obviously useful for analytical purposes only, since in real life it is very rarely that one encounters pure representatives of either inclination.



The characteristic feature of the revolutionary inclination is that the Internet and what it represents (digital communication, computerisation, interactive vertical and horizontal communication, global accessibility, etc.) marks a turning-point in the history of journalism: from here on, journalism will never be what it used be. From the perspective of the evolutionary inclination, the Internet does bring about significant changes to journalism as a social and economic institution, as a professional practice and consequently to the journalist's role, but essentially journalism will be carried out rather conventionally. Starting with these basic differences, we can review the issues that Internet communication poses to journalism.

As regards the question of newspaper publishing and the Internet, the revolutionary inclination tends to emphasise the advantages of electronic (web) publishing over publishing on paper. The technical features of the Internet combined with computer-aided communication are considered so superior that the accent is placed on developing online publications. Being real-time, global, interactive and multi-media is something that cannot be achieved by clinging to the "Gutenbergian platform", so there is no reason to preserve the outdated traditions of print journalism. In practice this means that news should be originally constructed with the intention to publish them online, making use of all the means and ways available to present them in a digital communication environment. The possibilities to improve the relationship between the profession and the audience by means of Internet communication is one important aspect in the revolutionary inclination.

From the point of view of evolutionary inclination, the newspaper on paper will remain the basic platform for journalism. In this inclination the strive for multi-purpose or recycling news production is accepted as far as it does not "cannibalise" (the trade jargon often heard at publishers' gatherings) the main product. The evolutionary inclination reminds us that for the foreseeable future, the printed newspaper and its advertisements will continue to bring in the revenues, and possible new competitors from outside the traditional media are not seen as a serious threat. Consequently, the online newspaper (if it is launched) is treated more as a technical testing device, it is designed to resemble the printed newspaper and its contents are shovelled preferably with automatic software from the editorial systems of paper newspapers. The problem of losing contact with the audience is admitted but treated in other ways than using the Internet as a tool for building a readership community.

As for the effects that the Internet has in terms of empowering journalists with new tools, the two inclinations do not at first glance seem to differ very drastically. The Internet is seen as a potentially useful source of information for journalists, and the necessary skills needed to utilise the tool are considered essential for journalists. Therefore the Internet is considered to be a crucial element in both the basic education and the further training of jour-

nalists. However, differences appear when we talk about the practical measures that need to be taken in order to secure the effective use of the Internet in newsrooms. The revolutionary inclination equates the Internet with the telephone, implying that it should be as easy to use the Internet as it is to make a phonecall: accessible from each workstation, involving no unnecessary restrictions and, most importantly, an approved part of the journalist's daily tasks. The evolutionary inclination proposes a more experimental approach with dedicated Internet terminals protected by restrictive firewalls. Using the Internet is considered "surfing", and it is seen as an exceptional activity that should not endanger the traditional standards of journalism by replacing trusted methods and sources with dubious cyberspace ones.

As regards the professional role of journalists, the differences between the revolutionary and evolutionary inclinations are perhaps most clearly visible. While the revolutionary inclination assumes that the traditional role of journalists as information brokers and gatekeepers of information will diminish if not altogether disappear due to the Internet and the new communication habits induced by it, this is not considered a major cause of concern. Indeed, the appearance of horizontal communication between citizens is seen as a healthy sign from the point of view of democratic processes, for instance. Similarly, the possibility of citizens to have equal access with journalists to original sources of news via an information network is considered to enhance the accountability of journalism and hence actually to strengthen its position. Genuine interaction using the Internet is supposed to have the same effect by bringing the audience and journalists closer together.

The evolutionary inclination stresses the role of journalists as information mediators. Journalists' traditional task of finding and selecting information on behalf of the audience and presenting it to them is by no means disappearing in the Information Society. On the contrary, as the (over)flow of information increases, there is in fact an even greater need for professionals who are capable of filtering relevant information according to "everlasting" journalistic principles. This role does not exclude closer interaction with the audience, but it is not considered a primary task compared to proper journalistic routines.

As we can see, there are various dimensions that differentiate between these typifications. There is the attitude towards new technology, there is the question of securing profits in journalism, there is the problem of the audience deserting journalists and there is the self-reflection of the profession. The relationship of the Internet with journalism exceeds the boundaries of technology, confirming that when the effects of technology (the Internet) on a social phenomenon (journalism) are assessed it is necessary to take into account other factors apart from technology.

## 5.2. Intervening aspects

No doubt one of the most important aspects that will define the actual effect of the Internet on journalism is the attitude of the audience. The crucial difference between the Internet and earlier technological innovations in the sphere of communication, especially newspapers, is that in this case the outcome depends largely on citizens, not on journalistic and other media agents. As has been pointed out with regard to the publishing industry and the Internet: “In contrast to the earlier situation, this consumer orientated development and its impact cannot be controlled by the publishers.” (Enlund 1996, 27). Earlier technological novelties in newspapers had to do primarily with technical production (printing presses, computerised composition, etc.) which comes in the sphere of entrepreneurial decision-making, whereas the Internet is an open communication medium and its fate depends on how the public at large adopt it.

The behaviour of the audience has two dimensions that are relevant to the relationship of the Internet and journalism. The aspect that is discussed most widely is the one where citizens are seen as suppliers of Internet-related technology. The rhetoric in this respect is about the penetration of computers in households, about the number of Internet connections per person in any given country and about citizens as consumers of Internet services. This aspect is obviously very important since without adequate hardware and software, citizens will not be able to participate in Internet communication. It is also important to journalism how the audience for online journalism is constructed. At the moment Internet users are predominantly youngish, well-to-do, educated male citizens, although some findings in the USA imply that the profile of Internet users is drifting closer to the profile of the average citizen (Online newcomers..., 1999). The result may be that online journalism is primarily directed to serve certain elites in society instead of the broader public.

A related issue is that in the network society, the presumption of a relatively homogenous, wide audience may no longer be valid. Even the performance of traditional media has been moving towards segmentation (see e.g. Castells 1996, 337-342), and the Internet may further enhance this trend because customised output is technically rather easy to realise. It is important to note that although the media may strengthen the tendencies of fragmentation in society by targeting different contents to different audience segments, the phenomenon itself has its roots in social development. Society during the industrial age was characterised by a strive for channels of public expression based on the need for shared communication (McQuail 1992, 6), whereas the social patterns of the Information Society seem to be characterised by “widespread social and cultural differentiation, leading to the seg-

mentation of the users/viewers/readers/listeners” (Castells 1996, 370; emphasis removed). From the point of view of journalism, this trend is problematic because it may undermine the special status of journalism and journalists as agents of public interest.

Another issue is how and for what purposes the audience will actually use the Internet, provided it has adequate devices at its disposal. Earlier I reminded that the Internet was originally a communication medium in the sense of point-to-point or many-to-many messaging. Mass-scale publishing, especially journalistic publishing, is a late-comer in cyberspace and even today it can be assumed that “the use of the Internet...for journalism appears to be a minor sideline when compared to the mega flows of trivia, entertainment, chatting, role playing and other games...” (Dahlgren 1996, 61). It is quite possible that the Internet is not a proper platform for journalism after all - at least for the conventional one-to-many, one-way journalism of traditional media. The audience may want to use the Internet for fun, and even if it is used for obtaining information that will not necessarily involve journalistic media. There are countless other information sources on the Internet from discussion groups to the web-sites of original sources. The Internet may change citizens’ communication culture, leading them away from journalism.

Another important factor with regard to the Internet and journalism is the nature of journalism as business. As indicated earlier in this study, media executives (here represented by editors) tend to judge the Internet from the business perspective. In this respect experiences of Internet ventures have not exactly been encouraging: very few media have made a profit out of their journalistic web-sites. This may have to do with the environment of the Internet, which is alien to journalism: “The Web was not designed as a commercial medium, but as a way to distribute and connect information to communities of interest.” (Caruso 1997, 33) Indeed, one important feature of Internet communication has been that its contents are free. Although this is now slowly beginning to change, it seems to be extraordinarily difficult to charge a fee for Internet news services. The logic of business suggests that investing in developing journalism on the Internet is non-productive, especially when the trend in media corporations appears to be that journalism is more and more profit-driven (see Hickey 1998 and related articles).

Even when publishing houses make investments in new media, the motives may be narrowly business-oriented. Instead of aiming at better quality in journalism or deeper interaction between journalism and its audience or other similar public service interests, the Internet is seen predominantly as a possible way of lowering production costs. This attitude applies not only to the Internet, but reflects the habitual behaviour of media executives with regard to new technology. Referring to a survey on the use of new technologies in newsrooms, Paul (1995) observed that “most enthusiasm on the part

of the management was about cutting cost, doing things faster and providing more glitz". In the case of the Internet this could mean a strategy of recycling printed news in online newspapers and possibly in mobile media, while downsizing original beat reporting for the benefit of "re-purposing", and forgetting the possibilities of the Internet as an information gathering resource.

The shape that Internet communication will take in society will depend not only on business-driven interests, but also and importantly on statutory regulation on international, national and local levels. This intervening aspect is a cluster of explicit (laws, statutes, EU directives, etc.) and implicit (public subsidies, taxation, etc.) actions that form communication policies, copyright arrangements and networking infrastructure (lines, public access Internet terminals, R&D funding) that either improve or hinder the spread of Internet use. For instance, regulations concerning public access to official data is an important factor. In principle, digital and network technologies make the databases maintained by the authorities more accessible to the public as well as to journalists. In practice, this is often invalidated by bureaucratic attitudes and/or restrictive legislation. Improved means of communication are not a sufficient condition in expanding the transparency of administration. Considering the significance of the Internet for journalists, this is an important aspect.

It is also important to note that the overall trend in the 1990s in statutory regulation has been towards deregulation, which in practice has meant that communications has been moulded more by business interests than by public interest as expressed by democratically elected public authorities: "The pace and development of media development is increasingly determined by powerful global corporations rather than by governments." (McQuail 1997, 512) This most certainly will have an impact on the development of the Internet, too. From a business point of view the ideal user of the Internet is a paying customer, whereas in terms of public interest the ideal user might be one who is a participating citizen. In fact, in the longer run the latter strategy might well be more productive from the point of view of journalism as well, because it indicates a formation of a wide base of users which could provide mass-scale audiences for journalism.

The fourth aspect shaping the relationship of journalism and the Internet is the pattern of professional practices. Carey (1997, 331) emphasises that journalists are shaped not by ideals but by practices: "Journalists are constituted in practice." It has been shown earlier that adapting the Internet to journalistic work requires new kinds of professional practices, but at least to a certain extent traditional practices act as a resisting force limiting for instance the use of the Internet's interactive features. Conventional journalistic practices seem to take up so much of the journalist's time that there is no chance to take advantage of the new resources available. Following Carey,

we may conclude that prevailing traditional practices hinder the emergence of the Internet Age journalist and journalism.

The obvious question that arises now is this: how can existing practices be changed if those who are performing the practices are made by them? The autocratic answer is that practices will change when those who have sufficient power order them to be changed. This applies to journalism, too, since newsrooms are very much hierarchic organisations. Reporters perform tasks that are assigned to them by editors, and editors convey the will of the publishers and owners. If for business interests or other reasons the owners judge interactional journalism to be for the good, then no doubt the daily practices will be re-designed so that journalists will have plenty of time to converse online with the audience.

This angle is rather one-sided, however, presenting journalists as marionettes without their own will and judgement. We also need to take into account the self-understanding of the profession. Although ultimately doing journalism for money, journalists maintain a distinctive professional identity which is cherished and upheld by a system of professional organisation, ethics and education. As indicated earlier, this identity is very much based on the principle of detachment so that journalists consider themselves outsiders in the issues on which they report in society. On the other hand, there are signs now within the profession which imply that this detachment has gone too far, leaving journalists isolated from the audience they are supposed to serve. Especially in the public or citizen journalism movement (see e.g. Lambeth et al. 1998) it is emphasised that journalists should be better aware of citizens' agenda. If this kind of tendency gathers momentum within the journalistic profession, the detaching identity may transform into an "attaching" one, creating a need for better tools and skills for communicating with the audience.

Finally, there is the technology itself. It should be remembered that the Internet was not born and that it is not being developed primarily for the purposes of journalism. Therefore the problems of journalism on the Internet - cumbersome interface, the confusing organisation of WWW, the required new skills, etc. - will probably continue regardless of the inconveniences they cause for the media. Technology is not of course developed according to its own logic, but in relation to its use and the response it gets in society. In this regard also journalism is one source of feedback to technical developers involved in designing new versions of interfaces, browsing software and so on. However, journalistic institutions are only one user of the Internet and therefore there are no guarantees that Internet technology will develop in the direction the journalistic media would like to see it develop.

### 5.3. Looking ahead

The Internet, as we have seen above, serves as a useful device for analysing journalism in the context of the Information Society. Though basically a technological item, the Internet is at the same time a symbolic emblem of the recent trends in society. It crystallises the development in the fields of communications technology, business economies and public sector as well as in cultural spheres. Against this background it is not at all surprising that some very basic questions of journalism have emerged in the course of this study, questions which in essence are not technological but which are actualised because of the overall social change expressed in this study by Internet technology. The Internet is a catalyst that brings fundamental issues of journalism into the limelight.

In conclusion, let me briefly highlight some key notions with regard to the future of journalism that have emerged from this study of the Internet and journalism, and contemplate their implications to journalism education and journalism research.

First of all, it seems quite clear to me that in network society the role and nature of journalism is changing. One important aspect in this regard is the changing relationship between journalism and the audience. This has two sides to it: On the one hand journalism has to deal with the fragmenting audience, and on the other hand it should try to maintain its status as a cohesive informant in society. Fragmented but at the same time possibly global audiences lead journalism to greater diversification of its performance. From the business point of view this vision must be tempting, since the media can choose the best paying customers as their target groups. However, we should remember that although new technology allows for a more diversified output in journalism, this is not genuine personalisation of journalism in the sense that the journalistic work process is designed to meet individual tastes. For practical and economical reasons, journalism consists for the main part of bulk production even in the Age of the Net, and it is only in the receiving process that individuals in the audience can make choices using personalising technology; and even then, most of the choices that can be made are defined by the media. What is emerging, however, is journalism that is consumed in a more diversified way according to the various interests of a fragmented audience.

Despite the growing diversification in the consumption of journalism, I consider it unlikely that general purpose journalism will disappear. One reason for this is that as a social institution, journalism claims its status by referring to its role as a servant of public interest. Targeting journalism exclusively to certain elite groups in society undermines the justification of this claim. Another reason is that in a democracy, there is a social need for shared

information. To be able to act as citizens, people need to have a journalism that monitors the surrounding world (globally and locally) and tells about events that affect them all. (Singer 1998) Therefore journalism will probably retain its social standing in the Information Society as well. Drawing on Schudson (1995, 1-2), one can say that if journalism were somehow to disappear, it would soon be re-invented: "It is hard to picture the contemporary world, even in the face of a technology that makes each of us potentially equal senders and receivers of information, without a specialized institution of journalism". One important and rather practical reason for this is that the audience is after all relatively content with the setting where someone else is delivering situation reports of ongoing matters. Most people hardly have the time or the desire to organise their own information gathering devices, no matter how easy-to-use technologies the Internet environment will make available.

However, even though journalism will probably retain its fundamental function in society, I think it is necessary for journalists to re-think their position as professional communicators and let the audience into the realm of journalism. In network society, with global interactive communications technology enabling horizontal citizen communication and with multiple opportunities to by-pass journalists using alternative information channels, the audience is in a position to seriously challenge journalists as information (and entertainment) disseminators. Therefore the profession must find ways to build an attaching relationship with the audience. As has become clear in this study, the traditions of the profession as well as journalists' present role perceptions lean heavily on the attitude of detachment. While being part of the profession's strive for an autonomous status in society, detachment has also meant the exclusion of the audience from journalism; the audience has been positioned as a passive receiver. In network society this setting should change: the audience should gain a more active role in journalism, including the journalistic work process. The interactive features of Internet communication mean that the audience can become a genuine coproducer of journalism, especially in online media, or at least an active debater with journalists, a debater who is not only listened to but also conversed with. Whether or not this possibility can be realised, however, depends on the professional identity of journalists.

Allowing the audience to become an active partner in journalism does not, in my opinion, mean that the profession will lose its position in society. On the contrary, a closer relationship between the audience and journalists could enhance the role of journalists as agents of public interest in their communities. Combining the spirit of public journalism and the possibilities of interactive communications technology may well create a better understanding between journalists and the audience. This could result in a strengthen-



ing of civil society by way of letting citizen communication and journalism enrich each other.

At the same time this new “attaching” professional identity would help journalists to distinguish themselves as professionals from emerging new information disseminators. As we have seen in this study, it is very likely that new communications technology will attract new entrepreneurs into the field of journalism as well. These new competitors, with little or no journalistic traditions, practise what can be called fringe journalism in the sense that journalism is not their core activity, and also in the sense that they are operating on the periphery of journalistic sphere, often with no intention of offering full-scale journalism services. Although the actual journalistic content in new online publications may be produced by a staff with journalistic skills, the publishers themselves are mostly unaware of journalistic values and journalistic professional culture, including journalistic ethics. This may give traditional journalistic institutions and their journalists an advantage, because, in spite of well grounded journalism criticism, the traditional media and the profession itself still carry an aura of trustworthiness.

This is not to say that the profession and traditional journalistic media should or even could go on with their daily routines in network society in the same way as before. The need for more attaching journalism was mentioned earlier, but there is more to be considered. In our society of information overload, it is not sufficient for journalists to adhere only to the role of information disseminator. Mediating information from sources to the audience has been the essence of the detaching professional identity of journalists, but in the future this task can and most possibly will be carried out by a multitude of new actors from news services of fringe journalism to applications such as intelligent agents roaming all over the Internet. In order to maintain their status in society journalists have to offer more than isolated facts. One of the most important features of this augmented journalism is the contextualisation of issues. This implies that journalists are bound to discard their role as objective by-standers in society; they must make issues understandable, which means presenting interpretations and opinions. In addition, contextualisation can be served by more transparent journalism which openly presents its sources and work processes. Again, although new communications technology makes this possible, the crucial factor is how the profession understands its role with regard to the audience and democracy.

The strong suggestion to the journalistic profession in the Information Society is that journalists should no longer perceive themselves as traditional gatekeepers in society’s communication processes. This obviously requires self-examination among the profession, but it should be noted that journalists are by no means alone in this turmoil of professional roles. This is a reflection of what is happening elsewhere in society, where “the professions have lost their former bases of social status” (Kontinen 1989, 176). In

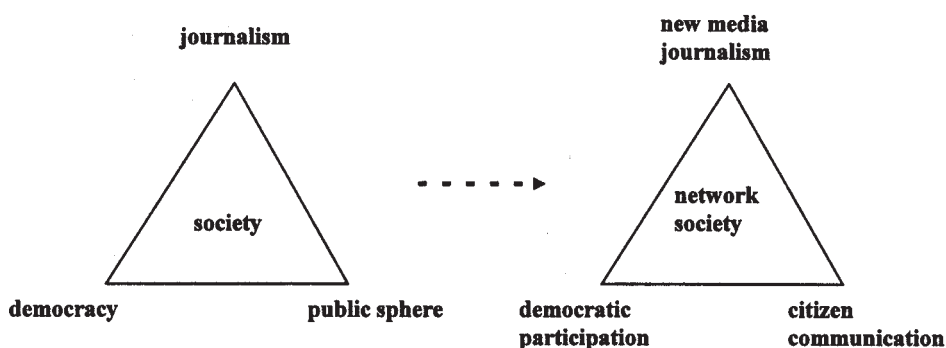
order to (re-)gain their former positions, the professions should develop “narrow intellectual techniques and a narrow specialization” (ibid.). In the case of journalists this is extremely difficult, because the potentialities of Internet communication tend to undermine the traditional position of journalists in communication processes in society. Admittedly, as was said earlier, the journalist will be needed, but more as an interpreter of events and an orientator of civil society than as “the one who decides what people need to know” (Singer 1997, 73). This will be a major change in the profession’s social role or at least in how the profession itself wants to define its status, and it may well be that the actual social role will change faster than the role perception within the profession. Therefore the profession and individual journalists now seem to be in a situation where it is necessary to define the profession’s attitude towards the changing social environment.

Secondly, what has been presented above indicates that new professional qualifications will emerge. Indeed, the study suggests that the Internet must be incorporated in journalism education. Regardless of its use in journalistic publishing, the Internet evidently is an information gathering tool for journalism in all, new and old, media. The skills required in this respect should become an essential and natural part of the journalists’ professionalism, not tomorrow but today. The challenge for journalism education institutions is perhaps not so much to arrange Internet courses, but to arrange them so that they are an integral part of overall journalism training. Ad hoc or specialised Internet courses give exactly the wrong impression, presenting the Internet as a peculiar phenomenon instead of one natural strategy of journalistic information gathering. It may be necessary to organise special Internet training for those journalists who entered the profession before the Age of the Net and who were thus left without basic Internet literacy, but newcomers in journalism education are certainly familiar with the Internet. In their case the main thing is not to teach them how to use the Internet but to show how it can be used to improve the quality of journalism. This requires not only the teaching of search techniques, but also providing future journalists with intellectual tools for processing, evaluating and contextualising information.

The question of Internet publishing in journalism education is a bit more complicated. In the light of this study and observations in the media industry, it seems unlikely that there will be a considerable amount of jobs available for special online journalists in the near future. So far vacancies have been scarce and jobs have mainly consisted of routines of online publishing (coding, editing) instead of creative new media journalism. On the other hand, and regardless of the Internet, it seems - on the basis of what has been proposed by publishers - that in the future, journalists will be expected to be able to work across different media. The implication is that journalism education should be able to give novices of the profession the basic skills and competencies they need to work in various media. This is not to say that the

individual journalist should profoundly master all media, but in order to survive in the labour market all should have a basic understanding of various traditional as well as new media requirements. This is no minor task for journalism education, since the new skills that need to be taught will not displace the old, traditional ones, and this inevitably stretches the resources available. A further problem is that existing journalism education is not very well prepared for providing new journalists with the kind of social skills that seem to be important in online journalism in network society.

Finally, there is the issue of researching journalism of the Information Society. This study has intentionally been focused on the Internet and its effects on journalism, but the project has made it clear that the question of journalism in the Information Society deserves to be examined from other perspectives, too. One possible approach is to try and define a research agenda for journalism as a social phenomenon in the Information Society, with the purpose of updating the position of journalism in changing society in relation to democracy and the public sphere. Basically, the research setting in itself would be traditional: the relationship of journalism, democracy and the public sphere, but now in the context of the Information Society the approach would be defined to meet the characteristics of the new situation. (see Figure 5.1).



*Figure 5.1 Approach for journalism research in the Information Society.*

The underlying premise is that society is seen as an Information Society or at least as being in the process of transforming from industrial society into a network society. This implies that the significance of new communications technology and its consequences are recognised, though not of course necessarily accepted.

The journalism dimension in the research agenda would thus be oriented towards network and other new media. Concrete research questions could include multi-media storytelling in online news, mastering new information

sources or the community-building features of online newspapers. On the democracy dimension, then, the emphasis would be on the role of journalism in contributing to democratic participation for instance by providing "orientating journalism" (Bardoel 1996, 297) by means of new communications technology and new professional practices. Lastly, in the era of network communication, journalism should be seen as a parallel information channel alongside citizen communication. Research should address the question of how journalism could contribute to and/or benefit from the horizontal citizen communication enabled by information networks.

In this setting the actual technology is not neglected, but it is assessed in the social context and, most importantly, from the normative premise of participatory and transparent democracy and in terms of how applicable it is from these perspectives. This kind of contribution from journalism research would undoubtedly be useful also from the point of view of developing communications technology. Far too often technology development is directed by its own logics instead of the actual social needs of its users. It has been pointed out that "much present-day research focuses on social *adaptation to* IT [information technology], rather than how IT may be designed to suit people" (Lyon 1995, 59). By trying to understand the priorities and preferences of the citizens and journalism, this socially oriented research setting might help to overcome that shortcoming.

# Literature

- The main titles of non-English sources have been translated by the author and are given in [square brackets].
- The URL address of an online source is given in <arrow brackets>.
- The date in (brackets) after an online source indicates when the source has been downloaded.
- If an online source consists of several files, this has been indicated in the text by the name of the file in question. For example: "Lasica 1996, /ajrjd6.html".

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